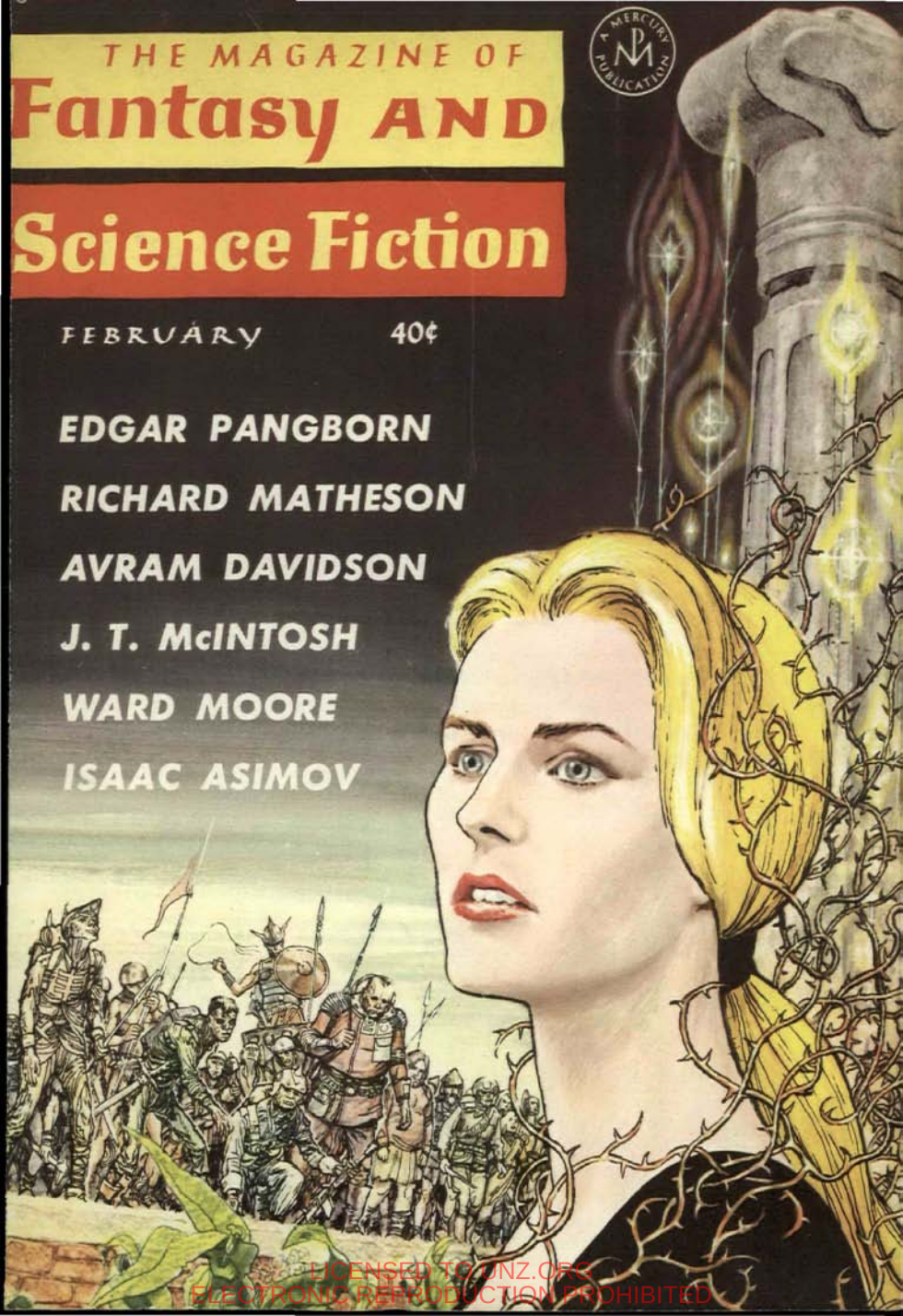


LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Fantasy and Science Fiction

FEBRUARY *Including Venture Science Fiction*

The Garden of Time	J. G. BALLARD	5
Ferdinand Feghoot: XLVIII	GRENDEL BRIARTON	12
The Hovel on the Alley off Eye Street	AVRAM DAVIDSON	13
One Into Two	J. T. MCINTOSH	19
Gruesome Discovery (*verse*)	WALTER H. KERR	31
Pirate Island	JOSEF NESVADBA	32
The Traveller	RICHARD MATHESON	39
Rebel	WARD MOORE	50
Window to the Whirled	BARRY STEVENS	58
Science: Superficially Speaking	ISAAC ASIMOV	78
Books	ALFRED BESTER	89
Excerpts from the Latterday Chronicle (*verse*)	LEWIS TURCO	91
The Snake in the Closet	MATTHEW GRASS	92
The Golden Horn (*novelet*)	EDGAR PANGBORN	98
In this issue . . . Coming next month . . .		4
F&SF Marketplace		130

Cover by Emsh (illustrating "The Garden of Time")

The Magazine of Fantasy and Science Fiction, Volume 22, No. 2, Whole No. 129, FEB. 1962. Published monthly by Mercury Press, Inc., at 40¢ a copy. Annual subscription $4.50 in U. S. and Possessions, $5.00 in Canada and the Pan American Union; $5.50 in all other countries. Publication office, 10 Ferry Street, Concord, N. H. Editorial and general mail should be sent to 580 Fifth Avenue, New York 36, N. Y.; advertising mail to P. O. Box 271, Rockville Centre, N. Y. RO-6-3831. Second Class postage paid at Concord, N. H. Printed in U. S. A.

© 1961 by Mercury Press, Inc. All rights, including translations into other languages, reserved.

Submissions must be accompanied by stamped, self-addressed envelopes; the Publisher assumes no responsibility for return of unsolicited manuscripts.

Joseph W. Ferman, PUBLISHER — *Robert P. Mills*, EDITOR

Alfred Bester, BOOK EDITOR — *Isaac Asimov*, CONTRIBUTING SCIENCE EDITOR

J. Francis McComas, ADVISORY EDITOR — *Ruth Ferman*, CIRCULATION DIRECTOR

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

In this issue . . .

Josef Nesvadba, whose story "Pirate Island" appears on page 32, was born in Czechoslovakia in 1926, began his writing career as a playwright and translator from the English ("The Rime of the Ancient Mariner" and modern English poetry), then turned to science fiction and fantasy. His stories have appeared in various Czechoslovakian magazines, and have been collected into two books—THE DEATH OF TARZAN and EINSTEIN'S BRAIN (the title story of the second will appear in these pages soon)—and a third collection—AN EXPEDITION IN THE OTHER DIRECTION—will be published in Czechoslovakia shortly. . . . All of this is only a sideline, however—Dr. Nesvadba is a practicing psychiatrist at the Faculty Polyclinic in Prague.

"The Adventures of Ferdinand Feghoot: XLV1," in our December issue, unaccountably appeared without a byline. In case you wondered, it was by Grendel Briarton, and it was based on a suggestion kindly sent in by H. Orlo Hoadley. Our apologies to both gentlemen.

Coming next month . . .

A special All Star Issue, with a wraparound cover by Mel Hunter. The exact line-up is not definite yet, but it will include most of the following:

***"Measure My Love,"* by Mildred Clingerman**
***"The Man Who Made Friends with Electricity,"* by Fritz Leiber**
***"Who's in Charge Here?"* by James Blish**
***"Shards,"* by Brian W. Aldiss**
***"Wonder As I Wander: Some Footprints on John's Trail Through Magic Mountains,"* by Manly Wade Wellman**
***"Jonathan and the Space Whale"* (novelet), by Robert F. Young**
***"A War of No Consequence,"* by Edgar Pangborn**
***"Napoleon's Skull Cap"* (short novelet), by Gordon R. Dickson**
***"Shadow on the Moon"* (a novelet of the People), by Zenna Henderson**
***"Science: That's Life!"* by Isaac Asimov**
"Books," by *Alfred Bester*

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

From England, a tale of an onrushing horde, and a strange garden that stood in its path . . .

THE GARDEN OF TIME

by J. G. Ballard

TOWARDS EVENING, WHEN THE great shadow of the Palladian villa filled the terrace, Count Axel left his library and walked down the wide rococo steps among the time flowers. A tall, imperious figure in a black velvet jacket, a gold tie-pin glinting below his George V beard, cane held stiffly in a white-gloved hand, he surveyed the exquisite crystal flowers without emotion, listening to the sounds of his wife's harpsichord, as she played a Mozart rondo in the music room, echo and vibrate through the translucent petals.

The garden of the villa extended for some two hundred yards below the terrace, sloping down to a miniature lake spanned by a white bridge, a slender pavilion on the opposite bank. Axel rarely ventured as far as the lake, most of the time flowers grew in a small grove just below the terrace, sheltered by the high wall which encircled the estate. From the terrace he could see over the wall to the plain beyond, a continuous expanse of open ground that rolled in great swells to the horizon, where it rose slightly before finally dipping from sight. The plain surrounded the house on all sides, its drab emptiness emphasising the seclusion and mellowed magnificence of the villa. Here, in the garden, the air seemed brighter, the sun warmer, while the plain was always dull and remote.

As was his custom before beginning his regular evening stroll, Count Axel looked out across the plain to the final rise, where the horizon was illuminated like a distant stage by the fading sun. As the Mozart chimed delicately around him, flowing from his wife's graceful hands, he saw that the advance columns of an enormous army were moving slowly over the horizon. At first glance, the long ranks seemed to be progressing in orderly lines, but on closer inspection, it was apparent that, like the obscured detail of a

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Goya landscape, the army was composed of a vast confused throng of people, men and women, interspersed with a few soldiers in ragged uniforms, pressing forward in a disorganised tide. Some laboured under heavy loads suspended from crude yokes around their necks, others struggled with cumbersome wooden carts, their hands wrenching at the wheel spokes, a few trudged on alone, but all moved on at the same pace, bowed backs illuminated in the fleeting sun.

The advancing throng was almost too far away to be visible, but even as Axel watched, his expression aloof yet observant, it came perceptibly nearer, the vanguard of an immense rabble appearing from below the horizon. At last, as the daylight began to fade, the front edge of the throng reached the crest of the first swell below the horizon, and Axel turned from the terrace and walked down among the time flowers.

The flowers grew to a height of about six feet, their slender stems, like rods of glass, bearing a dozen leaves, the once transparent fronds frosted by the fossilised veins. At the peak of each stem was the time flower, the size of a goblet, the opaque outer petals enclosing the crystal heart. Their diamond brilliance contained a thousand faces, the crystal seeming to drain the air of its light and motion. As the flowers swayed slightly in the evening air, they glowed like flame-tipped spears.

Many of the stems no longer bore flowers, and Axel examined them all carefully, a note of hope now and then crossing his eyes as he searched for any further buds. Finally he selected a large flower on the stem nearest the wall, removed his gloves and with his strong fingers snapped it off.

As he carried the flower back onto the terrace, it began to sparkle and deliquesce, the light trapped within the core at last released. Gradually the crystal dissolved, only the outer petals remaining intact, and the air around Axel became bright and vivid, charged with slanting rays that flared away into the waning sunlight. Strange shifts momentarily transformed the evening, subtly altering its dimensions of time and space. The darkened portico of the house, its patina of age stripped away, loomed with a curious spectral whiteness as if suddenly remembered in a dream.

Raising his head, Axel peered over the wall again. Only the furthest rim of the horizon was lit by the sun, and the great throng, which before had stretched almost a quarter of the way across the plain, had now receded to the horizon, the entire concourse abruptly flung back in a reversal of time, and now appearing to be stationary.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

The flower in Axel's hand had shrunk to the size of a glass thimble, the petals contracting around the vanishing core. A faint sparkle flickered from the centre and extinguished itself, and Axel felt the flower melt like an ice-cold bead of dew in his hand.

Dusk closed across the house, sweeping its long shadows over the plain, the horizon merging into the sky. The harpsichord was silent, and the time flowers, no longer reflecting its music, stood motionlessly, like an embalmed forest.

For a few minutes Axel looked down at them, counting the flowers which remained, then greeted his wife as she crossed the terrace, her brocade evening dress rustling over the ornamental tiles.

"What a beautiful evening, Axel." She spoke feelingly, as if she were thanking her husband personally for the great ornate shadow across the lawn and the dark brilliant air. Her face was serene and intelligent, her hair, swept back behind her head into a jewelled clasp, touched with silver. She wore her dress low across her breast, revealing a long slender neck and high chin. Axel surveyed her with fond pride. He gave her his arm and together they walked down the steps into the garden.

"One of the longest evenings this summer," Axel confirmed, adding: "I picked a perfect flower, my dear, a jewel. With luck it should last us for several days." A frown touched his brow, and he glanced involuntarily at the wall. "Each time now they seem to come nearer."

His wife smiled at him encouragingly and held his arm more tightly.

Both of them knew that the time garden was dying.

Three evenings later, as he had estimated (though sooner than he secretly hoped), Count Axel plucked another flower from the time garden.

When he first looked over the wall the approaching rabble filled the distant half of the plain, stretching across the horizon in an unbroken mass. He thought he could hear the low, fragmentary sounds of voices carried across the empty air, a sullen murmur punctuated by cries and shouts, but quickly told himself that he had imagined them. Luckily, his wife was at her harpsichord, and the rich contrapuntal patterns of a Bach fugue cascaded lightly across the terrace, masking other noises.

Between the house and the horizon the plain was divided into four huge swells, the crest of each one clearly visible in the slanting light. Axel had promised himself that he would never count them, but the number was too small to remain unobserved, particularly when it so obviously marked the

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

progress of the advancing army. By now the forward line had passed the first crest and was well on its way to the second; the main bulk of the throng pressed behind it, hiding the crest and the even vaster concourse spreading from the horizon. Looking to left and right of the central body, Axel could see the apparently limitless extent of the army. What had seemed at first to be the central mass was no more than a minor advance guard, one of many similar arms reaching across the plain. The true centre had not yet emerged, but from the rate of extension Axel estimated that when it finally reached the plain it would completely cover every foot of ground.

Axel searched for any large vehicles or machines, but all was amorphous and uncoordinated as ever. There were no banners or flags, no mascots or pike-bearers. Heads bowed, the multitude pressed on, unaware of the sky.

Suddenly, just before Axel turned away, the forward edge of the throng appeared on top of the second crest, and swarmed down across the plain. What astounded Axel was the incredible distance it had covered while out of sight. The figures were now twice the size, each one clearly within sight.

Quickly, Axel stepped from the terrace, selected a time flower from the garden and tore it from the stem. As it released its compacted light, he returned to the terrace. When the flower had shrunk to a frozen pearl in his palm he looked out at the plain, with relief saw that the army had retreated to the horizon again.

Then he realised that the horizon was much nearer than previously, and that what he assumed to be the horizon was the first crest.

When he joined the Countess on their evening walk he told her nothing of this, but she could see behind his casual unconcern and did what she could to dispel his worry.

Walking down the steps, she pointed to the time garden. "What a wonderful display, Axel. There are so many flowers still.

Axel nodded, smiling to himself at his wife's attempt to reassure him. Her use of 'still' had revealed her own unconscious anticipation of the end. In fact a mere dozen flowers remained of the many hundred that had grown in the garden, and several of these were little more than buds—only three or four were fully grown. As they walked down to the lake, the Countess's dress rustling across the cool turf, he tried to decide whether to pick the larger flowers first or leave them to the end. Strictly, it would be better to give the smaller flowers additional time to grow and mature, and this advantage would be lost if he retained the

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

larger flowers to the end, as he wished to do, for the final repulse. However, he realised that it mattered little either way; the garden would soon die and the smaller flowers required far longer than he could give them to accumulate their compressed cores of time. During his entire lifetime he had failed to notice a single evidence of growth among the flowers. The larger blooms had always been mature, and none of the buds had shown the slightest development.

Crossing the lake, he and his wife looked down at their reflections in the still black water. Shielded by the pavilion on one side and the high garden wall on the other, the villa in the distance, Axel felt composed and secure, the plain with its encroaching multitude a nightmare from which he had safely awakened. He put one arm around his wife's smooth waist and pressed her affectionately to his shoulder, realising that he had not embraced her for several years, though their lives together had been timeless and he could remember as if yesterday when he first brought her to live in the villa.

"Axel," his wife asked with sudden seriousness. "Before the garden dies . . . may I pick the last flower?"

Understanding her request, he nodded slowly.

One by one over the succeeding evenings, he picked the remaining flowers, leaving a single small bud which grew just below the terrace for his wife. He took the flowers at random, refusing to count or ration them, plucking two or three of the smaller buds at the same time when necessary. The approaching horde had now reached the second and third crests, a vast concourse of labouring humanity that blotted out the horizon. From the terrace Axel could see clearly the shuffling, straining ranks moving down into the hollow towards the final crest, and occasionally the sounds of their voices carried across to him, interspersed with cries of anger and the cracking of whips. The wooden carts lurched from side to side on tilting wheels, their drivers struggling to control them. As far as Axel could tell, not a single member of the throng was aware of its overall direction. Rather, each one blindly moved forward across the ground directly below the heels of the person in front of him, and the only unity was that of the cumulative compass. Pointlessly, Axel hoped that the true centre, far below the horizon, might be moving in a different direction, and that gradually the multitude would alter course, swing away from the villa and recede from the plain like a turning tide.

On the last evening but one, as he plucked the time flower, the forward edge of the rabble had

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

reached the third crest, and was swarming past it. While he waited for the Countess, Axel looked down at the two flowers left, both small buds which would carry them back through only a few minutes of the next evening. The glass stems of the dead flowers reared up stiffly into the air, but the whole garden had lost its bloom.

Axel passed the next morning quietly in his library, sealing the rarer of his manuscripts into the glass-topped cases between the galleries. He walked slowly down the portrait corridor, polishing each of the pictures carefully, then tidied his desk and locked the door behind him. During the afternoon he busied himself in the drawing rooms, unobtrusively assisting his wife as she cleaned their ornaments and straightened the vases and busts.

By evening, as the sun fell behind the house, they were both tired and dusty, and neither had spoken to the other all day. When his wife moved towards the music room, Axel called her back.

"Tonight we'll pick the flowers together, my dear," he said to her evenly. "One for each of us."

He peered only briefly over the wall. They could hear, less than half a mile away, the great dull roar of the ragged army, the ring of iron and lash, pressing on towards the house.

Quickly, Axel plucked his flower, a bud no bigger than a sapphire. As it flickered softly, the tumult outside momentarily receded, then began to gather again.

Shutting his ears to the clamour, Axel looked around at the villa, counting the six columns in the portico, then gazed out across the lawn at the silver disc of the lake, its bowl reflecting the last evening light, and at the shadows moving between the tall trees, lengthening across the crisp turf. He lingered over the bridge where he and his wife had stood arm in arm for so many summers—

"Axel!"

The tumult outside roared into the air, a thousand voices bellowed only twenty or thirty yards away. A stone flew over the wall and landed among the time flowers, snapping several of the brittle stems. The Countess ran towards him as a further barrage rattled along the wall. Then a heavy tile whirled through the air over their heads and crashed into one of the conservatory windows.

"Axel!" He put his arms around her, straightening his silk cravat when her shoulder brushed it between his lapels.

"Quickly, my dear, the last flower!" He led her down the steps and through the garden. Taking the stem between her jewelled fingers, she snapped it cleanly, then cradled it within her palms.

For a moment the tumult less-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

ened slightly and Axel collected himself. In the vivid light sparkling from the flower he saw his wife's white, frightened eyes. "Hold it as long as you can, my dear, until the last grain dies."

Together they stood on the terrace, the Countess clasping the brilliant dying jewel, the air closing in upon them as the voices outside mounted again. The mob was battering at the heavy iron gates, and the whole villa shook with the massive impact.

While the final glimmer of light sped away, the Countess raised her palms to the air, as if releasing an invisible bird, then in a final access of courage put her hands in her husband's, her smile as radiant as the vanished flower.

"Oh, Axel!" she cried.

Like a sword, the darkness swooped down across them.

Heaving and swearing, the outer edge of the mob reached the knee-high remains of the wall enclosing the ruined estate, hauled their carts over it and along the dry ruts of what had once been an ornate drive. The ruin, formerly a spacious villa, barely interrupted the ceaseless tide of humanity. The lake was empty, fallen trees rotting at its bottom, an old bridge rusting into it. Weeds flourished among the long grass in the lawn, over-running the ornamental pathways and carved stone screens.

Much of the terrace had crumbled, and the main section of the mob cut straight across the lawn, by-passing the gutted villa, but one or two of the more curious climbed up and searched among the shell. The doors had rotted from their hinges and the floors had fallen through. In the music room an ancient harpsichord had been chopped into firewood, but a few keys still lay among the dust. All the books had been toppled from the shelves in the library, the canvases had been slashed, and gilt frames littered the floor.

As the main body of the mob reached the house, it began to cross the wall at all points along its length. Jostled together, the people stumbled into the dry lake, swarmed over the terrace and pressed through the house towards the open doors on the north side.

One area alone withstood the endless wave. Just below the terrace, between the wrecked balcony and the wall, was a dense, six-foot-high growth of heavy thornbushes. The barbed foliage formed an impenetrable mass, and the people passing stepped around it carefully, noticing the belladonna entwined among the branches. Most of them were too busy finding their footing among the upturned flagstones to look up into the centre of the thornbushes, where two stone statues stood side by side, gazing out over the grounds from their protected vantage point. The larger of the fig-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

ures was the effigy of a bearded man in a high-collared jacket, a cane under one arm. Beside him was a woman in an elaborate full-skirted dress, her slim serene face unmarked by the wind and rain. In her left hand she lightly clasped a single rose, the delicately formed petals so thin as to be almost transparent.

As the sun died away behind the house a single ray of light glanced through a shattered cornice and struck the rose, reflected off the whorl of petals onto the statues, lighting up the grey stone so that for a fleeting moment it was indistinguishable from the long-vanished flesh of the statues' originals.

***Through Time And Space With Ferdinand Feghoot:* XLVIII**

On an excursion into Old Testament times, Ferdinand Feghoot became a close friend of the Prophet Ezekiel's, and many were the long talks they had about morals, flying wheels, and the future of man.

So it was that Ezekiel revealed a vision unto him: "Lo! I was in what seemed a great valley of stone, and the walls thereof were carved into seats for a multitude, and thereof was the shape of a diamond, with Angels at its four corners, and in the middle an Archangel, holding in his hand a hard ball. This he did throw with much force, and Angels with staves did strike at it to no avail; and so it continued for a period, and a second period, and five more, while the Archangel Gabriel did utter such mysteries as 'Strike three— that's Lucifer out!' and 'End of the seventh, *still* no score.' Then, on a sudden, all was changed. The Archangel Michael smote the ball so that it flew from the valley, and three other Angels who had reached the corners before him came running in; and the multitude beat their wings and shouted harmoniously, so that I was filled with great joy and awe. Then I turned, and saw that now the Lord's seat was empty, and sadness struck me that He was not there, and I have been depressed ever since."

Comfortingly, Feghoot patted the old gentleman's shoulder. "Don't worry about it, Ezekiel," he said. "Remember, in the big inning God created Heaven and Earth."

—Grendel Briarton (*with thanks to Peggy Kernerman*)

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

If you are puzzled by any faintly familiar time, place, person, thing, or national characteristic in this indescribable gouache of big business, politics, ensorcelment and young love, please remember that the totally irrational nature of our continuum does *have its rational counterparts in other continuums.*

The Singular Events Which Occurred In The Hovel On The Alley Off Eye Street

by Avram Davidson

IN 1961, THE YEAR WHEN THE dragons were so bad, a young man named George Laine, an industrial alchemist by profession, attended the coronation of the new president in Washington. The guilds were in high favor with the president-select, John V (the first of that name since John IV C. Coolidge), who sent to each and every of their delegation, as a mark of his esteem, garments of vertue worthy of the occasion, viz. a silken hat, a pair of galoshes with silvern buckles, a great-coat with a collar of black samite, cuff-links enchased in gold, and a pen-and-pencil set of malachite and electrum which it were guaranteed to write under water and over butter: both, as it happened, essential to the practice of industrial alchemy.

The ceremonies proceeded without any untowardness. The Supreme Justice of the Chief Court placed on the President's head the sacred beaver with the star-spangled band and declared that "Regardless of rape, crude, choler, or national ore or gin, any resemblance is purely coincidental." The Chairman of the Board of Augurs of the Federal Reserve System pronounced a curse in weirdmane and in womrath on anyone who should presume to send gold o'er the white-waved seas. The new Veep, wearing the ritual ten-gallon hat, and mounted on a palomino, cantered up and down before the Selectoral College, and uttered the prescribed challenge: "Whosoever doth deny that the Honorable John V Fitz-Kenneth is the right-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

ful Chief Executive of Thiscountry lies, and is an S.O.B." The out-going Jester raised the liturgical *hwyl* of *We want Wilkie,* and was smitten twice with a slapstick and thrice with a bladder, both wielded by his successor. The Fall River Chamber of Commerce and Horror presented the ceremonial breakfast of cold mutton soup, sliced bananas, and an axe: it was ceremoniously refused. A Boston Brahmin, clad in cutaway, *dhoti,* and sacred thread, offered a salver bearing two curried codfish balls; the new President ate both whilst the Brahmin intoned,

Eat it up, wear it out,
Make it do, or do without;

after which he, the B.B., hurried to wash himself in sacred 6% Charles water to remove the impurity of feeding with a lower caste.

George Laine and his fellows of the alchemists and other guilds were not forgotten even afterwards; for Prex Jax (as the newsguild had already termed him *in parvo*) sent them out great smoking helpings of buffalo hump, bear paws, caponized peacocks, pemmican, ptarmigan, succotash, and syllabub, from the high table where he was dining with his notables, including Surgeon-General Doctor Caligari, who had just been raised to Cabinet rank.

It was during these moments of revelry and mirth that George choked on a quartern of orange in an Old Fashioned Cocktail, all went black before his face, and, on awakening to find himself bound with silken cords in a hovel on an alley off of Eye Street, knew that he had been ensorceled.

There was a bim looking bemused at him with a bodkin in her bosom, and he wotted well it were for lack of wit anent her that he bode bound: for who was she but Yancey-Courtney Bellerегarde, a Drum Majorette 1/c, who had been sitting in his lap that time he raised the dram-glass to his lips.

"I say, that bodkin must hurt something dreadful," he said (not having attended the N.Y. High School of Gallanterie Trades in vain); "untie me and I'll have it out for you in a trice: there's a good gel, do."

The bim smiled scornfully. Her lips were as red as the chassis of a new-model Jaguar of the first enameling. "Not on your tin-type, Cully," she said. "Rats. Nit." She spoke in the Archaic tongue of the bim-folk, which is akin to elf-talk, and cognate with 23 Skiddoo (unlawful for a man to know until he has passed his finals in The Deep School, and been awarded the right to wear the Navel Plug, with two Pips).

"Nix on the soft-soap, Charlie," she said; "I only keep the bodkin there because these, now, sorcel-sacquets don't have any pockets in them, as if you didn't know. Oh

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

you kid!" she concluded, archly. And with this she she withdrew the bodkin, dipped its prickle into a pot labelled *Poyson Moste Foule,* and approached the supine young industrial alchemist with the tip of her tongue held between her teeth.

"Slip me the Formula for the Transmutation of Borax Without the Use of Cockatrice-egg," she said (speaking with some difficulty, her tongue, as we have already noted, you clod, being between her teeth), "and we'll be back in the Grand Ballroom of the Mayflower in lots of time to see Ed Finnegan made a K.T.V.; afterwards we can tiptoe up to any of the thirty-odd double rooms which my Company keeps rented at all times, and you may have your wicked will o' me without fearing the House-Dick, because I'll put a Cheese-it spell on the door, see, which it's proof against Force, Force-Fields, Stealth, Mort-Main, Nigromancy, Mopery, and Gawk: so give, Cully, give."

A cold sneer crossed George's hot lips. "I say, what an absolutely rotten proposal!" he exclaimed. "You know perfectly well that I have sworn by the most frightful oaths to remain true in mind and deed to Alchymy, Ltd., of Canada, and to keep myself physically clean, mentally straight, and morally pure! I suppose you're one of these simply awful party girls which one hears that General Semantics, Inc., of Delaware, keeps on their payrolls to entrap, ensorcel, enviegal, enchaunt, anduce, endive, and endamage clean-living young chaps into betraying secrets. Well, I shan't, do you hear? Better I should die. So there!"

But the bim, far from being one whit abashed by this manly defiance, laughed as coarsely as the position of her tongue would permit. "Well, if that don't take the cake," she snickered. "Gee, what a simp!" and made feint as though she would withdraw George's Plug, two Pips or no two Pips.

"No, really, don't touch me, do you hear?" George said, stoutly, trying to roll over on his stomach, "I'm really most frightflie ticklish, and besides, without the Plug I should swell up with lint in simply no time; funny thing about me, I'm very susceptible to navel lint, always was, from a child."

But the silken cords held him faste.

"The Formula for the Transmutation of Borax Without the Use of Cockatrice-egg," she said, inexorably, making little jabs at him with the bodkin dip't in Venom.

George mimicked her: "'—Uthe of Cockatwithe-egg'!"

Unguardedly she laughed, releasing the tip of her tongue from between her teeth, and thus . . . Those who are Cupboard Certified Auditors of The Deep School will understand *thus,* and those who

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

are *not* needn't imagine for one minute that we are going to reveal for free, secrets for which others have paid good money, no siree. Suffice it, then, to say that in a trice George had leapt out of his bonds, flung the bodkin from the bim's hands with such force that it pierced the door and hung quivering. This produced a startled cry from behind the door, which George flung open, revealing a man, a tape-recorder, and a flash-camera. The man first cringed, then assumed an expression combining both defiance and a falsely hearty air of good will.

"Weh-hell, Laine," he birbled.

"What," demanded George, sternly, "is the Assistant Director of Research for the Middle Atlantic States Division of Alchymy, Ltd., of Canada, doing cowering behind the door of a hovel on an alley off of Eye Street, with a tape-recorder and a flash-camera; what?"—a question which, put like that, might make any man pause before answering.

Mr. Marcantonio Paracelcus (for such was his name), paused before answering. He swallowed. "It was a Test, you see, George."

"I fail to see."

"Well, it was a *test*. The Company is considering you for an important new job. In order to find out how you would shape up under pressure, we have tested you. I am, um, happy to say that you have passed the Test."

George said, "Oh, good. Then I get the job. *What* job?"

Mr. Marcantonio Paracelcus seemed to find some difficulty in answering this question. Whilst he stood there, came a buzz and a clatter, and that which George had hithertofore considered to be merely a tallboy-sized TV set opened up, revealing itself to be an Observation Armoire containing a microphone, *two* tape recorders, an automatic closed-circuit television camera, and Dr. Roger Bacon Buxbaum, Chief Director of Research for the Middle Atlantic States Division of Alchymy, Ltd., of Canada, Marcantonio Paracelcus, on perceiving his superior, turned ashen, livid, and pale, in that order.

"The job in question, George," said Dr. Buxbaum, "is that which until a moment ago was held by the gentleman you now see cowering behind the door; but which is no longer so held. On realizing that you were being considered for his position, he determined on this unworthy method of discrediting you: hence, the tape-recorder, on which he hoped to capture the sound of your voice as you revealed the Formula for the Transmutation of Borax without the Use of Cockatrice-egg; hence the flash-camera with which he hoped to capture the sight of you in a," and here the begign, balding Buxbaum blushed a bit, "compromising position with this young fe-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

male person here. Little did he know," the urbane researcher winked, and placed his right forefinger by the right side of his nose, "that we were onto his jazz from the word Go . . .

"And to think that he would sully the semi-sacred season of the Coronation by his meretricious machinations; fie, sir, do you call yourself a Thiscountrean? But I forebear harshness; modern science has taught us that such a one as you is really sick, and needs help. Come along now—George! Expect to see you for lunch, day after tomorrow, at the Alembic, one sharp!"

George went pink with pleasure, for what was the Alembic but the most expensive eatery favored by the upper echeloms of the M.A.S.D. of Alchymy, Ltd. (Canada); and this invite betokened his full acceptance into the post previously held by his unfortunate predecessor, who even now, snivveling miserably, was being firmly guided out by the elbow. George's feelings of sorrow, which did him credit, were tempered by the reflection that, after suitable treatment at the Company's Rehabilitation Farm in North Baffin Land, the man might still prove capable of many years of devoted service; though, of course, in a minor capacity.

For a moment all was silent in the hovel on the alley off of Eye Street. George eyed the bim. The bim eyed the floor. After a while she spoke. "I suppose you hate me," she said.

"No, I—"

"I suppose you think I'm miserable and treacherous."

"No, I—"

"I suppose you think I would really have stuck you with a poysoned bodkin, don't you? Well, the jar only contained a Sophronia Finkelstein preparation for the treatment of tired skin and subcutaneous tissues; so there."

George said, "No, I fully realize that as a bim, and as a sorceress under contract to General Semantics, Inc., of Delaware, you were only carrying out your duty. And now, if you don't mind, I wonder if I might use your phone to call a taxi?"

Fancy his astonishment when she burst into tears.

"We have no phone," she wept. "I'm not a bim. I never worked for General Semantics. My parents couldn't afford to send me to Sorcery School. How I put you under that spell and brought you here, my old Auntie Eglantine was a white witch and I picked up some little piddly old spells from her, is all. I am really just a Drum Majorette, 1/c. Oh, I wish I were dead! A hoo, hoo, hoo!"

George, at first with awkwardness, then with growing appreciation for the task, patted her hands, her shoulders, and the general area of the small of her back. "To

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

tell you the truth, Miss Yancey-Courtney," he said, "I would just purely hate it if you were to be a bim. I mean, like, those hairy *feet*? And their toe-nails *glow* in the dark? Why, a man couldn't hardly relish his victuals, let alone keep his mind on his Transmutations . . . Of course, I'm just speaking speculatively, I mean; having always kept myself physically pure, mentally clean, and morally square, according to the terms of my Triune Oath to the Company, which I have never regretted," he said, regretfully.

"Of course," she murmured, wiping her eyes on his shirt-tail.

"Listen," she said, "do you know when it was that I first felt a revulsion I was barely able to conquer at the infamous Marcantonio Paracelcus's proposal? It was when the Veep rode in. When he gave out the Challenge I could see you clench your fists until your knuckles went what I mean *white;* as if you were just *daring* any old Recounter to challenge the Selection!"

"Hm," said George, grimly.

"I'll bet you must be awfully strong."

George, modestly, said, well, shoving all that lead and gold around, *you* know. She said that she could well imagine. There was a pause. Then he asked what time it was. She said it was 7:45, why? He said that if they hurried, they could still get to see Ed Finnegan dubbed a K.T.V. She said, yes, they could, couldn't they? She asked if he was very fond of Ed Finnegan. There was a pause. He said that as a matter of fact he couldn't stand Ed Finnegan.

"Neither can I!"

"All those trained wombats!"

"And that incessant, hearty laugh!"

There was another pause. Then, "My, those are handsome galoshes!" she said.

"Gift of the President."

"Pipe the silvern buckles, will yuh?"

"Mmm."

"But don't you think you'd be more comfortable if you took them off?"

"The buckles?"

"Oh you silly! The ga*loshes*!"

"I might at that."

And he did. And he was.

Outside, the Northern Lights hissed and crackled (or, again, it might have been the dragons, which were so bad that year); outside, the noise of revelry continually rose and fell in the streets; but inside, all was quiet in the hovel on the alley off of Eye Street.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

The safeguards against it were formidable, but Willy Ross had figured a way to transmit himself simultaneously to two different destinations. And what better way to establish an iron-clad alibi?

ONE INTO TWO

by J. T. McIntosh

AT SIGHT OF THE COP STANDing right in front of the Transmission Center entrance Ross laughed silently. It couldn't be better if he'd written his own script. Pulling in just ten yards from the cop, directly in front of the swing doors of the TC building, he got out of his car and locked it.

As he expected, the patrolman came steaming up and tapped him on the shoulder. "Hey, you," the cop said. "Just what do you think you're doing?"

"Huh?" said Ross, acting dumb.

"This is a no-parking zone. Can't you read?"

"Sure," said Ross. "No parking till 8 p.m. And it's . . ."

"And there's twenty minutes still to go," retorted the cop. "You just take your jalopy and stash it away in the Transmission Center lot over there."

Ross changed his tactics. "Look, I've got a date at the Moonpool, and I've only just time to make it. You don't have to see the car for the next twenty minutes, do you? And after that it'll be okay."

"On your way," said the cop inexorably.

"I'm a TC employee," Ross pleaded. "You can check on that if you like. My name's Willie Ross. I—"

"If you're in a hurry, you'd better get that car shifted."

Muttering under his breath, Ross unlocked the car, slid behind the driving wheel and U-turned to get into the TC parking lot. Under his pretense of impatience he was delighted. The cop would remember that Willie Ross, TC employee, had tried to park in front of the TC entrance at 7:40 p.m. He'd had a good look at him too, in front of the brightly lit TC building.

It was the first of many bricks which were going to build a rock-steady, unshakable alibi.

Ross parked his car, locked it,

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

and walked round to the front of the building. The cop gave him a not unfriendly wave. Ross waved back, just to be quite sure that the cop knew he hadn't made any mistake, that the Willie Ross who tried to park in front of the TC building had actually entered it at 7:43.

Margaret looked up as the swing doors closed behind him. She started to get up from behind her desk—the desk behind which Ross sat most mornings. Then, seeing who it was, she sat down again.

Ross grinned at her. "Moonpool," he said, and entered the nearest cubicle.

If Ross had been anyone but a TC employee she'd have sold him a ticket, taken him to a cubicle and set the controls herself. Since it was Ross she merely noted his name and destination on the pad in front of her.

That was the second brick. It was unnecessary to talk to Margaret, draw her attention to the time and make her remember him. She would automatically write down the time with his name and destination.

This didn't amount to proof, of course, that Ross had actually gone to Luna. All that she could swear to was that Ross had transmitted himself somewhere at 7:44. So there had to be more bricks.

Ross couldn't afford to take time to check the modified installation in the particular cubicle he had selected. Nothing showed, and it would work exactly the same as usual for everyone but himself.

But when he punched the buttons he knew that something very unusual was going to happen this time.

Thousands of people travelled between Earth, Luna, Mars and Venus every day. But very few ships made the trip, and those that did carried freight, not passengers. Matter transmission was much quicker and safer—so they said—than actual travel.

Of course there were accidents sometimes—just as there were train smashes, plane and ship disasters. These were, however, infrequent, and only individuals were involved. In no TC accident was there ever a deathroll of more than one.

You stood in a cubicle, a hundred thousand inquisitive beams analyzed you to the last atom and sent your complete specification, down to the motes of dust on coins in your pocket, on a carrier wave to your destination. There a receiver duplicated you. You didn't actually move an inch; the installation on Earth dissolved you into water and dust and swept the rubbish away, but not until you were at your destination, complete and in good working order.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

You or somebody exceedingly like you.

The designers had been very careful indeed to ensure that people arrived in one piece at one place, and that there was nothing left at the Transmission Center except useless, disorganized atoms. Otherwise certain smart people would get very rich very quickly by duplicating money and jewels and other valuables, and some of them might even devote their agile minds to the possible advantages of being in two places at one time.

All transmission centers were operated under strict government control to ensure that no such things ever happened. It needed a genius to solve the problem of outwitting the machines, and geniuses were never given the chance. Although it wasn't publicized, TC employees were never very bright. No one with an IQ of over 120 was ever allowed near the machines—except the maintenance technicians, who knew before they trained for the job that they were going to be watched very closely for the rest of their lives.

Every safeguard against possible abuse is a challenge. Willie Ross had taken up the challenge When he had been tested for his TC job (short hours and good pay) he had done exactly the opposite of what more naive candidates did. He aimed for a low IQ —and got it. At that he only just made it. His IQ came out at 119 and he knew that when he was tested again, as he would be soon, he'd never manage to hit the same figure. Next time it would be 108 or 130, and either figure would make the psychologists very suspicious.

Within two minutes of arriving on Luna, forty-five minutes after entering the cubicle at the Transmission Center in New York, Ross was at the Moonpool with Georgette. In another fifteen minutes they were both well on the way to being hilariously drunk.

"You were late, honey," Georgette pouted. "After telling me to be here at 8:15 for sure, too."

"Sorry, baby," said Ross. He had intended to be late—he wanted to be sure that Georgette was there before him, and consequently knew exactly when he arrived.

"And I was here at 8:15, honey."

"Good girl."

She already found some difficulty in focusing her eyes on him. "You won a lottery or something, honey? You seem pretty pleased with yourself."

"You could put it like that, baby. I think I've got some money coming to me. A lot of money."

Georgette surveyed him owlishly for so long that she forgot what they'd been talking about. Obviously, Ross thought, she told the truth in saying that she'd ar-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

rived at 8:15. Equally obviously she hadn't waited for him before she began drinking.

She was a tall brunette of eighteen summers but rather more winters. Her arresting figure was exiguously clad in a silver gown which was completely closed only for a few inches some distance below her tanned navel.

At one time Ross had considered marrying her, but now he wasn't so sure. Beautiful girls were commonplace in his life, and not having married Jill Jirell (now Jill Medner) he saw no overpowering reason why he should marry Georgette, who was only a fuzzy carbon copy of Jill, after all.

Besides, in Ross's book you only married a girl if there was no other way of getting what you wanted, and this hadn't applied in the case of either Jill or Georgette.

The Moonpool was a kind of night club on a lump of rock which never knew anything but night. It was open twenty-four hours a day, three hundred sixty-five and a quarter days a year.

On the Moon there were no vice laws. There was no tax on alcohol, no restriction on gambling, no closing time, no council of public morality or decency. If you didn't like what went on at the Moonpool, all you could do about it was not go there.

On the Moon there was next to no gravity either, which meant that paunches disappeared, brassiéres and girdles became completely unnecessary, and you could live it up all night without getting tired.

Meals were light and infrequent. You didn't go to the Moon to eat. Many people's digestive systems didn't take too kindly to the virtual absence of gravity. Besides, you didn't feel hungry on Luna, even after hours of exercise which would have been violent on Earth if it had been possible on Earth. On the Moon you got your nourishment out of a bottle.

Drunk as she was, Georgette danced well. You couldn't fall flat on your face on Luna unless you tried hard. You had time to be graceful, spending most of your time floating in the air.

"This is wonderful," Georgette breathed in Ross's ear as they glided across the not too crowded floor. "Why don't we do this more often?"

"Because this evening out is going to set me back something like a hundred dollars," Ross retorted.

"A hundred dollars . . . didn't you say you had a lot of money, honey?"

"No, I said I thought I had a lot of money coming to me. That's not quite the same thing."

A waiter who had threaded his sedate way through the dancers tapped Ross on the shoulder. "Excuse me, sir. Are you the gentle-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

man who left his name at the bar because he was expecting a phone call? Mr. Ross?"

"That's me."

"Your call has come through, sir. From Meyrburg, Mars."

"Thank you."

Ross left Georgette and made his way to the booth indicated. The conversation which was about to take place, he knew, was going to be one of the most remarkable conversations of all time.

Willie Ross glanced at the name plate on the inside of the cubicle door just to make quite sure. It read: *Meyrburg, Mars.*

He looked at his watch. The time was 8:29. The transmission had taken the usual forty-five minutes. It varied from individual to individual, the average being about forty minutes, but for Ross it was always forty-five.

So far so good. He was on Mars, in the city in which Herbert and Jill Medner lived.

Jill didn't know he knew she lived here. Probably her second reason for marrying Medner, Ross reflected, was the circumstance that he lived and worked in Meyrburg, a city in which, she must have thought, Willie Ross was unlikely to find her. The first reason, of course, was the fact that Medner was worth at least two million dollars.

Ross left the cubicle, his face turned away from the girl at the desk. Although it wouldn't be too serious if she got a good enough look at him to be able to identify him as Willie Ross later, it would be better if she didn't.

Ross's plan was foolproof. It wouldn't matter if the police knew what he had done and exactly how he had done it—they still wouldn't be able to do anything about it. But it was naturally preferable not to have them know how it was done.

He didn't see the girl at the desk, so presumably she didn't see him. Meyrburg time being 8:15 a.m., scores of people were leaving the Transmission Center there for Venus, whose morning temporarily coincided with Meyrburg's. Tickets didn't have to be shown on arrival. Everything was settled at the point of departure.

Out in the busy Meyrburg streets he strolled in leisurely fashion. There was no hurry. He had to give the other Willie Ross plenty of time to establish his alibi at the Moonpool.

That was the essence of his plan. One Willie Ross became two—one at the Moonpool with Georgette, one at Meyrburg, Mars, with nobody at all. For the Willie Ross on Mars was not supposed to exist, and would very soon cease to exist.

The modified transmitter back on Earth, if all had gone well, had burned itself out after the double transmission. That happened oc-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

casionally under ordinary use, and should cause no suspicion—and all signs of Ross's modifications would now be obliterated.

Meyrburg looked exactly like a Terran city except for the huge dome overhead. The people looked exactly like Terrans. It was impossible to tell which had been born on Mars and which had come from Earth or Venus.

Some twenty minutes after his arrival on Mars, Ross entered a phonebooth and put through a person-to-person call to Willie Ross at the Moonpool. Just to be on the safe side, Ross had to know that the double transmission had gone off without a hitch.

He left the booth satisfied. He had talked to himself, and knew that his plan was going to work. It was now safe to get on with it.

Later he would return to the Meyrburg Transmission Center, buy a ticket to anywhere at all under any name but his own, and transmit himself nowhere.

That was another thing which only Willie Ross could do. There were accidents sometimes. Naturally nobody wanted to be the victim of one of these accidents—as a rule.

But Willie Ross II knew perfectly well that after it was all over there could only be one Willie Ross left. And it was possible to use a TC cubicle to commit the most perfect suicide imaginable—no pain, no mess, no evidence except the record of a false name on the Meyrburg departure list.

Ross hugged himself with glee at the perfection of his own plan.

Ross left the booth and stood just outside it for a moment, rather drunkenly marvelling at the wonder of the Moonpool.

There was dancing, drinking, gambling, swimming. The seventeen vast halls opened into each other, except the huge pool itself.

Water was virtually uncontrollable in a low gravity field like that of Luna. If the pool had been like a normal swimming pool, a huge bath open to the air, most of the water would have been in the air most of the time. Any swimmer, still displacing his own weight of water and consequently being as low in the water as on Earth, would be quite capable of sending up huge waves and clouds of spray which would make things extremely uncomfortable for everybody else.

So the pool was a huge sphere, completely filled with water, and swimmers had to put on breathing masks and enter by an air lock.

Ross wondered whether to suggest bathing to Georgette, and decided against it. Swimming in the pool didn't represent a good alibi. Swimmers in an underwater pool didn't watch other swimmers and remember them. It would be much better to continue to drink and dance, talking to waiters and

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

bartenders, being remembered by other dancers and drinkers.

He noticed a girl he knew slightly, a pretty blonde dancing with a man so fat that even on the Moon he still had a belly. Without pausing to think he cut in.

"Willie Ross!" the girl giggled. "Didn't I see you dancing with somebody else? How's she going to like—"

"The evening wouldn't be complete without one dance with you." He wished he could remember her name. Not that it mattered, as long as she knew his.

The blonde's dress, what there was of it, was held on by a piece of pink tape and a prayer. He pushed the tape off her shoulder, and when she giggled and put it back, pushed it off again.

Suddenly he was whirled away from the blonde. He shot twenty feet through the air before crashing into the bare back of a gigantic white-haired woman. Dazed, he looked back the way he had come.

He had wanted to make a scene, but he had meant Georgette to interfere, not the blonde's erstwhile partner. Weight didn't mean much on the Moon. Mass, however, counted more than ever, and the blonde's beefy escort had plenty of mass. He glared aggressively at Ross, daring him to dispute possession of the blonde.

Ross declined the invitation. Murmuring apologies to the outraged dowager, he left the blonde to her tubby escort and picked his way back to Georgette.

There was no need to overdo it, he thought, massaging a bruise on his arm. Although it would be a perfect alibi to be in hospital with a broken back while the other Ross did his job, he had no intention of going that far.

"Who was that yellow-haired bitch you were making an exhibition of yourself with?" Georgette demanded sharply.

He devoted all his attention to pacifying her.

At 9:10 p.m. New York time (8:56 a.m. Meyrburg time) Ross was hidden in the plastic bushes beside a garage waiting for Herbert Medner to appear. Medner always opened the garage at 9 a.m. precisely and drove away in his car to his office in the city. And the garage entrance was hidden from the road by artificial plastic bushes and a plastic palm tree.

Ross had never met Medner, but he had seen so many pictures of him that there would be no difficulty in identifying him. He knew Medner's wife very well indeed. She had formerly been a New York showgirl, and the extent of Ross's knowledge of her was one reason for his presence in the bushes outside the Medners' house.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Three years ago Ross and Jill Jirell had collaborated in another scheme of Ross's—only this one hadn't worked. From Ross's angle it hadn't been too disastrous in that after its failure the New York police were interested only in Jill, not in him. In every other way luck had been against him. It seemed particularly unjust that three years later Jill should be married to a Martian millionaire and Ross should have nothing.

But now he had an opportunity to even things up.

Ross heard steps on the concrete walk which ran round the house. He crouched lower in the bushes. Medner appeared round the angle of the house, looking down at the bunch of keys in his hand. He selected one and fitted it into the lock of the garage door.

Ross sprang twenty-five feet from concealment and the half-brick he held crashed on the back of Medner's head. Before he could fall, Ross had hit him again and again, until Medner's head no longer looked like a human head.

There was no need to feel his pulse. The man was dead. Few corpses had ever been deader.

Ross tossed aside the brick, knowing it wouldn't hold fingerprints. He glanced through the trees, out at the road, and could see nothing. There had been very little noise. Medner lay on his face, blood from his head running down inside the back of his collar.

About to walk calmly and casually out of the driveway and away from the house, Ross heard steps again. He gathered himself to jump back in the bushes, but he didn't have time. Round the angle of the house came Jill Medner.

Before she could scream he had jumped the twenty feet between them, spun her round and put his hand over her mouth.

"Don't make a noise," he said softly, "and don't struggle, or I'll have to kill you too."

She seemed to believe him, for her struggles ceased. Ross didn't release her, however.

This was a cruel stroke of bad luck. Jill must certainly have recognized him. He did his best to minimize the misfortune.

"All right, so you know who I am," he murmured, drawing her behind a bush so that they couldn't be seen from the road. "And you can see your husband's dead. I wasn't going to talk to you until much later than this, Jill, and you weren't supposed to know for sure that I was the one who killed your husband. But it doesn't matter—I know far too much about you for you to tell the police the truth."

The girl shuddered convulsively. He was satisfied that she was too scared to tell the police all she knew.

"In a nutshell, Jill," he went on, "you get your husband's money now, and I get a fair share of

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

it. Is that clear? Otherwise the New York police are going to come looking for you."

He slackened his grasp. Then he said quietly: "I'm going to walk out of here now, and if I were you I'd think things over before I did anything at all. So long, Jill."

He did as he had said, walking away without a glance behind him. There was no outcry. The street was empty.

It was a pity that Jill had seen him, but it didn't really matter. She wouldn't dare talk, he told himself confidently.

It was done. Medner was dead. Now all he had to do was dispose of the only evidence that remained—himself. He died, but what did that matter? The other Willie Ross lived. The beauty of the plan was that the Willie Ross who lived would not only have an unshakable alibi—he would actually be innocent of murder.

But Ross's walk slowed as he considered things from a new and more immediate angle. All this was very well, but if he killed himself now he would be extremely dead, as dead as Medner was. He himself wouldn't benefit—only his twin.

There was another way, he thought. Another ending to the story. Another solution.

He would much rather he lived than his twin. And it wasn't impossible to arrange that. The perfect alibi would still stand. He would use it instead of his twin, that was all.

All he had to do was return immediately to Earth and be ready for Willie Ross II when he arrived. Or . . . wait. Suppose he went to the Moon? People often went there masked, for obvious reason. Or . . .

Perhaps the best way of all was to lie low for a day or so before dealing with his twin. Willie Ross II would have no means of knowing that he hadn't destroyed himself as arranged. And it would be days before the Martian and Terran police got together in suspecting either of the Willie Rosses of the murder of Herbert Medner.

Thinking rapidly, he hurried back to the Transmission Center. Speed was essential. Wherever he went, he had to get well clear of Meyrburg before the local police knew that a crime had been committed.

Venus, he decided. After a few hours on Venus he could return to Earth, but not to New York, where all the TC employees knew him.

Entering the Center, he crossed to the desk. "Caribana, Venus," he said. "My name is Henry Morgan."

He gave the name of the famous pirate with a straight face, enjoying the joke.

"No, it's not," said a grim voice behind him. "It's Willie Ross."

The Meyrburg cops put him in a

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

cell. They didn't question him. They told him they were waiting for Inspector Danely from New York, and that was all.

In his cell Ross tried to be philosophical. After all, the original plan had entailed his annihilation. And all that could happen now was that the police would make him adhere to the original plan. They might burn him. They probably would. But how could they punish the other Ross?

He shrugged his shoulders. It was still a perfect plan. If one twin committed a crime by which both twins stood to benefit, how could the cops execute both twins? One would be unlucky—and it might, by a supreme irony, be the wrong one. But the winner took all. And it looked as if the winner in this case was Willie Ross II.

In a way it was even better this way. Now that he was caught, he was ready to settle the whole affair as quickly as possible. He might as well confess to the murder, sign everything they put in front of him except anything relating to the double-Ross matter. They'd rush through his trial, execute him and draw a neat double line under the case. Case closed.

And then the field would be wide open for Willie Ross II.

Keys rattled and the cell door was opened. Two men entered. One was the local police chief. The other introduced himself as Inspector Danely.

"Glad to know you, Inspector," said Ross, cool and still confident. He held out his hand.

Danely seemed taken aback for a moment. He was a thick man with a perpetual frown, as if he had spent all his life peering through frosted windows. Perhaps he had.

Almost instantly he recovered. "You're a cool customer, Ross," he said. "But it isn't going to do you any good. We know the whole story, you see."

Ross laughed.

"I don't say you weren't clever," Danely admitted. "The safeguards against this sort of thing are pretty tight—tighter than you guess. You were lucky in one or two ways that you don't even know about. But you haven't gotten away with it, any more than anybody ever does get away with it."

He looked reprovingly at Ross, shaking his head like a crook who punishes his son not for stealing, but for being caught. "All the same, you might have come a lot closer, if you hadn't gone and spoiled it."

"Spoiled it?" said Ross, giving nothing away, but touched on the raw nevertheless. How had he spoiled it? Had Jill told the police everything? If so, that was hardly his fault. And anyway, that didn't spoil it. His was a plan that couldn't be spoiled.

"You're literally a man who would doublecross himself," Danely said. "In fact, you did. You

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

didn't stick to your plan here—did you think you'd do it on the Moon either?"

For the first time Ross felt a stab of apprehension. If Ross II hadn't taken his chance to establish the alibi, the whole plan fell. For both of them.

Danely stared hard at him. "Yes, you doublecrossed yourself, Ross," he said. "A kind of double-Ross, huh? After phoning yourself here, you came straight back from the Moon, went to New York police headquarters and told us all about everything."

"Wait a minute," said Ross angrily. About to say something rash, he thought better of it and grinned instead.

Danely was trying to trap him.

Danely knew what had happened all right, probably in detail. Ross was supposed to say he couldn't have returned from the Moon and told the New York police the whole story, because there hadn't been time. It would have taken forty-five minutes to return from the Moonpool to Earth, and Ross had been on Luna, talking to him on the phone, around 8:50 New York time. At Meyrburg Transmission Center Ross had been arrested just after 9:30 New York time.

It couldn't have happened that way. Allowing for traveling, explanations and radioed instructions, there was at least half an hour too little.

"All right, we'll try it another way," said Danely, unperturbed. "You called us from the Moon. You told us you were on Luna—which we could easily check, and did—and said that if a double of yours showed up at Meyrburg Transmission Center on Mars, we should hold him, because you had reason to believe—"

"Why waste your time, Inspector? Okay, I killed Herbert Medner. That's what you want, isn't it? Write out a confession and I'll sign it."

Danely and the Meyrburg police chief exchanged glances. "We'll do that," said Danely softly.

Ross had a few seconds' uneasiness. Had he been trapped somehow? Had the other Willie Ross also signed a confession? But that was absurd. Ross II only had to maintain all along that he'd been on Luna all the time, and nobody could touch him. Ross II couldn't be trapped. Ross II had done nothing wrong.

He signed the brief statement.

"Not that it really matters," said Danely casually, folding the paper and putting it in his pocket, "for we could make out a good enough case anyway. Mrs. Medner's story, your footprints in the garden . . ."

So Jill had talked. Knowing nothing of Ross's master-plan, she thought her evidence would convict him. She'd get a shock when Ross I was executed and Ross II put the bite on her.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"However smart you were, Ross," Danely sighed, "you could hardly hope to be able to outsmart yourself. And the same applied to the Ross who called us from Luna. You broke your own scheme two ways."

"But why . . ."

"Why did the other Ross call us? You should know. He thinks exactly as you do. He said to himself: 'Now if I carry out this plan I may be safe and I may not. I don't trust that guy—and who knows him better than me? But if I call the police I can make sure they catch my twin and hang him, and I'll be in the clear.' "

Danely peered at Ross again as if suspecting him of having changed into somebody else.

"Technically," he went on, "he was right."

"And he's going to get away with it," said Ross confidently.

"Sorry?" asked Danely curiously.

"No."

Danely nodded. "Okay. Let's go."

"Where?"

"Back to Earth."

"What for?"

"Your twin brought us into this. It's our case. So you're coming back to New York for trial."

Although Ross shrugged his shoulders as if he didn't care, he did. He didn't want to meet his twin. He didn't want to hear his twin condemning him to death. He didn't want the whole scheme brought into the open. He began to wish he hadn't had any second thoughts and had carried out his own perfect plan without making off-the-cuff changes in it.

But it couldn't be helped now.

He watched the preparations for taking him to New York. As a TC employee he had seen criminals being transported before and knew the routine. Danely and the other cop got into cubicles first. They'd be waiting for him when he arrived in New York. The Meyrburg police chief stayed behind, making sure Ross was properly dispatched.

When Ross arrived at New York Transmission Center he stepped out of his cubicle, saw Danely and the other cop, saw Margaret stare at him in the handcuffs which had been clicked on his wrists back on Mars, and still wasn't too worried.

Then . . .

He swore violently and tried to tear himself loose. Danely shook his head.

"You never had a chance, Ross," he said sympathetically. "You don't think you're the first to try this, do you? We know all the answers. And once you were fool enough to let us in on it we were way ahead of you."

Fear crawled in Ross's guts. He had seen nothing; it was in himself that he felt his doom.

For he was one again. The man who stood in the New York Trans-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

mission Center was the man who had killed Medner, and also the man who had been at the Moonpool with Georgette. He could feel in his belly and in his head the raw alcohol which had been consumed at the Moonpool, the bruises he had suffered there. He knew everything he had done at the Moonpool and everything he had done in Meyrburg. The two who had worked against each other were together in one body, one mind.

Knowing both halves of the story now, he knew exactly how they had done it. On the Moon and on Mars he had been told he was being taken back to Earth. And so he had been—to one receiver.

"I think we'll just forget your alibi," said Danely generously. "It would only confuse the issue. We can prove you killed Medner. You can say at your trial you were at the Moonpool too. It won't do you any good."

He smiled. "Glad we got you together again. There's much more point in burning you now. It's almost—" he grinned more broadly —" like killing two birds with one stone."

Gruesome Discovery at the 242nd St. Feeding Station

Having hopped from one warp to another
In the cubed queues at the algae troughs
And thus split into myself and other,
Although that damned green scum prodded coughs
Of incipient nausea, I still dared
Hope critical detachment on cellular
Levels would cause the thought to be unpaired
From its material doppleganger
And spare me gorge. Unfortunately the crush
Of feeders was such that mirages overlapped
And I found myself tongue deep in green mush
With appetite and aesthetic poles gapped
By hunger's spark and, from that moment, must confess
A swell of liking for the putrid mess.

—Walter H. Kerr

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

We are pleased to report that we have acquired three stories from behind the Iron Curtain. Pleased for two reasons: 1) It is always good, particularly for a magazine in our field, to hear from imaginative writers who have been influenced by cultures different in one way or another from the cultural environment we are most familiar with here; and 2) We believe that, generally speaking, any *sort of cultural communication between societies politically at odds is a Good Thing, in the sense that such communication in bulk must tend to remind Them and Us of our mutual human condition. . . . The following story first appeared in a Czechoslovakian weekly magazine,* Kultura, *in 1958, and was included in a volume titled* THE DEATH OF TARYAN, *Prague, 1958. For notes on the author, see "In this issue . . ."*

PIRATE ISLAND

by Josef Nesvadba

*West of Trinidad, in the Year of Our Lord 17 **-*

It was late in the month of August, between midday and six bells, to the west of Trinidad, when we first caught sight of the pirate schooner's mast on the horizon to the leeward. At first we could see only the yard-arm, then the crow's nest came into sight, and by evening we could see the whole ship with the black flag at the stern.

We had all been expecting it; we knew they'd be following us as soon as we set sail from Liverpool. We were surprised, on the contrary, that they hadn't shown up earlier. We were ready to give them a warm welcome. On deck we had a dozen brand-new mortars the like of which even the Queen's ships hadn't been given; we had muskets from the finest Paris workshops, such as the troops of the King of France would not have for years to come, each of them worth more than a pair of thoroughbred Arab steeds.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

And in the bows we had quantities of gunpowder direct from Italy, where as every man knows the finest damp-proof gunpowder is made by the master armourer Luigi. And what is more, we were approaching the trade wind belt. Here, as is well known, when the sea suddenly becomes as calm as oil and the ship comes to rest in the burning sun that can confuse even the sharpest wits, everything depends on the crew; at times they must be prepared to seize the oars and row as in the old-time galleys. My men were prepared for the worst. I had on deck the sons of the best Liverpool families, the flower of youth, gentlemen. Only the man at the helm was a sailor by trade. We had taken him on because he was familiar with the compass and the positions of the stars, and could take his bearings in uncharted seas. I had forgotten much since I last went to sea.

My friends—for on board this ship we are all friends—know well why we are sailing to these equatorial islands. They want to fight for their ideals. But pirates fight only for profit. All day long they are swigging rum and if their ship lies idle on the equator they are at each other's throats before they have time to take to the oars. I know them well. I know Captain Flint's crew. I used to sail with them at one time.

How I Became a Pirate.

My father, the Lord rest his soul, kept a small quayside inn by a deserted roadstead in the Castle district, to the south of Liverpool. A dying sailor whom I had taken care of as a boy gave me a roughly sketched map on which was drawn the richest and fairest island in the world—as the good man told me on his dying bed. He implored me to sail there if ever I wanted to find wealth and happiness in my life, and never to return.

I did not take the dying man's delirium seriously, and laid the map away in the bottom of my chest in the attic I shared with my brothers in our little inn. But when Mary betrayed me, when I was eighteen, and married Big Jim who had come back from the French wars a sergeant major, I recalled the island the old sailor had talked about, the island far away where a man can be happy. I signed on the first ship that sailed into our roadstead, running away from home.

On this ship, which was a pirate ship, I sailed many miles over the seas until one day we reached the vicinity of my island. It was a tiny island in the West Indies, quite insignificant looking. One night I jumped overboard and swam ashore. I crawled up on the beach among sea-lions, strange, barking animals which

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

filled me with terror. But I soon lost my dread. The inhabitants of the only village on the island received me with all hospitality, as if I had been a god. And indeed, as I discovered later, their religion taught them to expect a green god who would emerge from the sea.

I Become a High Priest.

They betrothed me to their graceful young queen, who dwelt in the only stone-built house in the village. I became their ruler and high priest, which did not prove difficult because all the people on the island were happy and contented; they did not need to work hard, for generous Nature herself provided for their needs; they did not need to clothe themselves, for the climate was fair and constant; and they never quarrelled, for living in plenty ill-will had never entered their hearts.

And beyond the village was a hill of gold, whence they mined the pure metal for what tools these blessed creatures needed. For gold was the only metal this people knew. Everything on the island was of gold—tools and shelves, pots and pans, spoons and the lances they used in their ritual, it seems as a survival of the memory of their forefathers who had conquered the island long ago. Here I lived in happy contentment.

When is a Man Happy?

But alas! I did not value my happiness. Soon I began to feel homesick; happiness alone was not enough for me—I wanted to boast of my happiness to my friends. As if a man needed an audience to envy him his life. As if a man could not be happy unless there were others who were not happy; so it seemed to me. But my islanders did not know how to envy anyone. They made me a large raft and sent me back to Heaven, as they thought.

Even their queen was calm, although I had thought she loved me. These people never felt pain, because they never suspected each other of evil. Sometimes I wondered if this island was not that mythical Utopia of which I had so often heard.

My Visit to Heaven

That is what it seemed to me, when I returned to Liverpool. As if I was really in Heaven. The gold I had brought with me from my fairy-tale island opened all doors, paved my way into the highest circles of society, and found for me the most magnificent friends. But there were many of them, as usual. And everybody knew I had come back from a distant voyage. Unless I had been a pirate, it meant I had discovered treasure, or a new land.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

A crowd of idle adventurers began to hang round me. They searched my rooms when I was not at home, bribed my servants and sent the most beautiful courtesans to win my secret from me. Finally I fell in with Captain Flint, from whose ship I had deserted. That betrayed everything. He paid me a visit and offered me a share of the spoils if I would take him to the treasure I had discovered.

I wanted to delay the matter. I knew there was little I could do now. The Captain remembered quite well at what latitude I had left his ship. Even if I refused to tell him anything, he would sail there himself and massacre my benefactors. I told him I would decide in a week.

An Audience with the Queen

Next day I hurried to London. The Queen gave me an audience the same evening. She had heard of my wealth, she said with a smile. She was of course willing to grant my request and protect my island from Captain Flint's crew, provided I revealed the position of the island; then I should be appointed Governor, receive a high salary, and be raised to the knighthood. Naturally the wealth of the island, and the inhabitants thereof, were the property of the Crown. So much for the Queen.

But I know what the mercenaries serving in Her Majesty's colonies are like. What difference is there between them and Captain Flint's crew? From time to time the best pirates are raised to the peerage; that is the custom, decreed by wealth. I hurried back to Liverpool.

The Society for the Protection of my Island

Here, together with several of my friends who were devoted to high moral principles, noblemen's sons who for the most part could not agree with their fathers' cruel ways, I founded a new society. We spent all the money we had on arms and equipment, boarded a ship which I had built some time previously, and secretly set sail. Our goal was clear: we wanted to save the last corner of this earth where people still live happily, we would help them to defend their Utopia, we would prove our human dignity. Such an adventure is worthy of gentlemen.

We sailed at a fair speed. But Captain Flint was not idle. And today, between midday and six bells, to the west of Trinidad, we first caught sight of the pirate schooner's mast on the horizon.

I had prepared yet another surprise. Below decks were stored sacks of louis d'or, guineas, guilders, moidores, dinars and tolas,

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

which I intended to scatter among the pirate crew as soon as their ship drew near enough. I could just imagine them fighting for the money which for us had no value.

But a Third Schooner Intervened

Next morning, early, she sailed past and saluted us with both her small cannon. The royal flag fluttered gaily in the stern. It was one of Her Majesty's war frigates. She had been waiting for us in the waters near my island.

The frigate grappled Captain Flint's ship and a cruel onslaught began. The pirates and the marines were fighting to the death for the sake of the booty we were to lead them to. By good fortune this kept them occupied until evening fell.

My man on watch in the crow's nest fainted. He was the son of Lord Macpherson and never in his life would he have believed men could treat each other with such savagery; he forgot that his own father had commanded Her Majesty's vessels.

We Protect the Island

Next morning we anchored near the island. Neither the pirates nor the frigate were to be seen. That gave us a few hours' grace.

The villagers welcomed me with delight, and the queen wept for joy. They wanted to celebrate the occasion, for they thought I had returned as a god in the company of a train of saints. Nor were they far from the truth. Every one of my companions was moved by the same noble thought: to save these people.

Hastily I told them of the danger threatening. That in a few hours enemies would fall upon them, ready to rob and even to kill. They did not understand me. They did not know the meaning of the word "enemy." And the idea of a man killing his fellow, like animals, seemed to them absurd. They did not understand, and instead of getting ready they prepared a magnificent feast, where the fairest girls and lads of the village danced in our honour.

We began to consider to which task in the defence each of them could be put. But they would not listen to us. My friends anxiously scanned the horizon to see when our pursuers hove in sight; impatiently we tried to bring the festivities to an end.

But the villagers were strong, and whenever we tried to move they promptly sat us down again in the golden chairs, like children. They would make good fighters, I thought. But how could we persuade them to co-operate? Soon the whole community was caught up in the dance. I knew their

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

way of passing the time in noble sports, games and dances. Now they would dance until they were exhausted.

My friends were distracted. How could we ever save these people? Their maidens were so lovely and their wine so heady, were we not in danger, too, of forgetting the task we had set ourselves? It was our helmsman, Israel Handy, who offered a solution; he alone could steer the ship, and for this reason came with us on our journey. Below decks we had many balls of iron, with chains, that could be used to bind a man. If we fastened the irons to their ankles they would be more manageable.

When they fell exhausted from their dancing, and slept at once, we set to work. We clothed them in armour to protect them from musket fire, put helmets on their heads and many pound iron weights on their ankles.

I Murder

The women tried to dally with us. They could not understand what we were doing to their men. Handy again came forward with advice: we should shut the women into their homes and punish any that came out. I tried to explain it to the queen. But she could not understand what I wanted. She wanted to scream and waken the men we had disarmed as they slept. I had to cover her mouth, but she resisted with all her strength. She would not behave reasonably, and I knew her cries would waken the whole island and make it impossible for us to defend it and thus put us all at the mercy of the pirates. I wanted to save her, and pressing on her mouth and throat, I strangled her.

Meanwhile the natives were awake. They would not listen to our explanations. They took no notice of the muskets we wanted them to learn to handle. They pulled off the armour we had given them and with the utmost ease—so strong were they—twisted off the iron weights which (as Handy revealed to me) had been loaded on board for the slave trade. Our ship was to have been a slave trader.

The natives flung themselves on us. It was the first time I had ever seen them angry. They surrounded us in the one stone house. They would not listen to reason and when I went out to speak to them they hurled their only golden spear at me. It scratched my arm. Then they began throwing stones; they brought their knives and before our eyes made more and more spears.

They attacked us and we were forced to fire at them. We had plenty of muskets and enough gunpowder. The gentlemen of my crew were all first-class shots. The

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

chase was their favourite pastime. We even fired at the women, who threatened us with the worst danger, for they were throwing flaming branches at the roof. We feared the house would be destroyed utterly, or that one of the torches would set fire to our store of gunpowder and blow us all up. We increased our fire. And the wind spread the fire right through the village.

Our Saviour

It was Captain Flint who saved us, one-eyed Captain Flint with his everlasting parrot on his shoulder, screaming its bad language all over the island. The sailors were swearing with amazement too. They had succeeded in sinking the royal frigate and wanted to take possession of the island. And we had got in first. They saw the fruits of our labours. The village was on fire and the natives were groaning on the ground. The pirates accepted us as their equals.

The Lesson

Since then I range the seas pitilessly. I took the name of The Skeleton and not a ship but retreats into the nearest harbour the minute my flag is sighted.

The King of England, who succeeded the Queen, and the King of Spain too, have twice offered me a squadron to lead against Spain or England as the case may be. But I sail the seas alone with my crew of gentlemen, and I carry on my trade like a man damned for ever, until I find salvation, until someone tells me where I made my mistake.

Who Will Tell Me?

(From an old parchment found in a sealed bottle fished up by Captain Stevenson, to the south of Corso Castello and to the west of Tortuga. Translated from the English and written down on December 8th, 19 **)

FINAL INVENTORY CLEARANCE

8 books for $1.00 (value $2.80)

We still have a limited number of copies of MERCURY MYSTERIES, BESTSELLER MYSTERIES and JONATHAN PRESS MYSTERIES at the press in Concord, N. H.

Send $1.00 for eight (8) exciting mystery books (sorry, we cannot offer choice of titles) to:

Mercury Press, P. O. Box 271, Rockville Centre, New York

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Professor Paul Jairus regarded the time machine's objective as sentimental rot . . . which made him the ideal observer to send on the mission.

THE TRAVELLER

by Richard Matheson

SILENT SNOWS DESCENDED LIKE a white curtain as Professor Paul Jairus hurried under the dim archway and onto the bare campus of Fort College.

His rubber-protected shoes squished aside the thin slush as he walked. He raised the collar of his heavy overcoat almost to the brim of his pulled down fedora. Then he drove his hands back into his coat pockets and clenched them into fists of chilled flesh.

He strode as rapidly as he could without getting the icy slush on his trousers and ankles. Clouds of steam puffed from his lips as he pressed on. He looked up a moment at the high granite face of the Physical Sciences Center far across the wide campus. Then he lowered his almost colorless face to avoid the cutting wind and hurried on around the curving path, his feet carrying him past the line of skeletal trees whose branches stood brittle and black in the freezing air.

The wind seemed to push him back from his destination. It almost seemed to Jairus as if it were battling him. But that was pure imagination, of course. Keen desire to be over the preliminary steps only made them seem harder. He *was* anxious. In spite of endless self-examination and preparation, the thought of what he was soon to witness excited him. Far beyond the power of mind to chill or snow to whiten.

Or mind to caution.

Now he was past the edge of the huge building. It shielded Jairus from the wind and he raised his dark eyes. In his pockets, his hands flexed impatiently and he felt a strong inclination to

© 1954 by Richard Matheson; originally appeared in BORN OF MAN AND WOMAN by Richard Matheson

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

break into a run. He must watch himself. If he appeared too excitable they might change their minds about letting him go. They had responsibilities, after all. He took a deep breath and let the cold air into his lungs. Once the initial fascination had gone he'd be his old rational self. It was the uniqueness of the situation that was upsetting his usual balance. But it was ridiculous to be *this* anxious.

He pushed through the revolving door into the building and almost sighed with pleasure as the warm air rushed over him. He took off his hat and shook the drops onto the marble floor. Then he unbuttoned his coat as he turned right and started down the long hallway. His rubbers squeaked as he walked.

To think, the idea probed at his brain, in less than a half hour it will happen. He shook his head at the inexplicable import of it . . . Never mind, he told himself, control yourself, that's all. You'll need self control to resist the pummeling of false sentiment.

Near the end of the hall he stopped in front of a door, half blonde wood, half frosted glass. His eyes moved briefly over the printed words before he pushed in.

Dr. Phillips. Dr. Randall. A blank space, recently scratched out. And, underneath, in neat red letters, the word:

Chrono-Transposition.

"You understand clearly then," said Dr. Phillips in an urgent voice, "you are to make no attempt to affect your surroundings in any way."

Jairus nodded.

"We have to emphasize that," Dr. Randall spoke from his chair. "It's the essential point. Any physical imposition on your surroundings might be fatal to yourself. And . . ." He gestured. ". . . to our program."

"I quite understand," Jairus said. "You can depend on my discretion."

Randall nodded once. He held up his hands and drew the fingers together nervously. "I suppose you know about Wade," he said.

"I've heard rumors," Jairus replied. "But nothing specific."

"Professor Wade was lost in the last transposition," Dr. Phillips said soberly. "The chamber returned without him. We must assume he is dead."

"That was early in September," Randall said. "It's taken us over two months to convince the board to let us try again. If we fail this time . . . well, that's the end of it."

"I see," Jairus said.

"I hope you do, professor, I hope you do," Dr. Phillips broke in. "A great deal is at stake."

"Well, let's not depress him any more," Randall said with a

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

tired smile. "I think you also know you're about to see something a lot of people would willingly give their lives to see."

"I know it," Jairus said. I also know a lot of people are fools, he thought.

"Shall we go then?" Randall asked.

The footsteps of the three men echoed in the hallway as they walked toward the Apparatus Laboratory. Jairus kept his hands in his coat pockets and did not speak except to make brief replies to their questions. Randall was telling him about the time screen.

"We've discarded the chamber as a dangerous vehicle for travel," Randall said. "You will travel in a circular energy screen which will render you invisible to the people you'll see. The screen *can* be broken by you but I think we've made it clear how perilous that can be."

"You will *please* remain within the screen boundaries," Phillips emphasized. "You must understand that."

"Yes," Jairus said. "I understand it."

"As an added measure, though," Randall said, "you will communicate with us through a chest speaker. This will give us information as you see it. And, also, if you feel any uneasiness, any premonition of danger to yourself—why, you have only to tell us and we'll bring you back immediately. At any rate your . . . *visit*, shall we say, will not exceed one hour."

An hour, Jairus thought. More than enough time to dispel the fallacies of the ages.

"With your health, your education, your background," Randall was saying, "you should have no difficulties."

"One thing I've wondered," Jairus said. "What makes you pick out this particular event instead of any other?"

Randall shrugged. "Maybe because it's almost Christmas."

Sentimental rot, Jairus thought.

They pushed through the heavy metal doors in the Apparatus Laboratory and Jairus saw graduate students moving around a metal platform set on conductor bars arranged like ties. The white-frocked students were setting up and adjusting what appeared to be colored spotlights all pointed to one spot on the platform.

Phillips went into the control room and Randall led Jairus to the platform and introduced him to the students. Then he checked the platform and the lights while Jairus stood by, nervous in spite of self-regimentation, heartbeats trembling his lean body.

Watch it now, he told himself, no emotional involvement. There, that's better. This is exciting, yes, but only as a scientific accomplishment, remember. The wonder is in the visiting and not the moment I am to visit. Years of study

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

have made that quite clear. It's nothing.

That's what he kept telling himself as he stood there on the platform, his hands shaking, watching the lab disappear as though it were blotted away. Feeling his heart pound violently and being unable to stop the pounding with rational words. Words that were: it's nothing, *nothing*. It's only an execution, only an execution, only . . .

I'm standing on Golgotha.

It's about nine o'clock in the morning. The skies are clear. There are no clouds, the sun is bright. This place, the so-called place of the skull, is a bare, unvegetated eminence about a half mile from the walls of Jerusalem. The hill is to the northwest of the city on a high, uneven plain which extends between the walls of the city and the two valleys of Kedron and Hinnom.

It's a very depressing location. Something akin to an unkempt city lot in our own times. From where I stand I can see discarded garbage and even animal excrement. A few dogs are foraging in the garbage. Quite depressing.

The hill is deserted except for two Roman soldiers. They're putting the upright stakes into the ground, hammering them with mallets into the holes they've dug. Looking around I can see a few people straggling up the hill. Apparently they want to get a good spot to watch the execution. You always find those kind of people, I guess.

It's warm here. I can feel the heat through the screen. The smell too. It's most offensive. There are large flies around. They move in and out of the energy screen without seeming to be blocked. I suppose that means people will do the same.

THAT'S CORRECT, PROFESSOR.

Wait. I can see a cloud of dust. A procession is coming this way. About ten to fifteen soldiers, I'd judge. And there are three men. Two quite burly ones in the lead. In the rear is a . . . is *him*. He's . . . oh, the dust is hiding him.

The two soldiers here are finished with their stakes. They're putting on their armor. Now they're buckling on their swords. One of the people asks them how soon it will start. The soldier says soon enough. Now they're . . .

. . . . . .

SOMETHING WRONG?

No, no, I'm just watching. I'm sorry. I should be talking. It's a little hard to remember.

Well, *apparently*, the legend about Simon of Cyrene is factual. The last man . . . *him*, dropped to the earth on his knees. Those cross beams . . . they must weigh almost 200 pounds. The man

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

can't get up. Now the soldiers are beating him. He can't rise. Too weak, I guess. Some other soldiers are forcing a passerby to lift the cross beam from the man's shoulders. The man stands. He follows behind Simon. I'll assume it's Simon of Cyrene. It can't be proved, of course.

Now the procession is quite close. I can see the two thieves. They're large men, hairy armed with long, dirty robes on their bodies. They don't seem to be having any trouble with their burdens. One of them is even laughing, it appears. Yes, he *is*. He just said something to one of the soldiers and the soldier laughed too.

They're almost here. I can . . .

I can see Jesus.

He's bent over but I can see he's quite tall. Over six feet I'd say. But he's quite thin. He's obviously been fasting. His face and hands are almost white from dust. He's stumbling. He just coughed from the dust in his lungs. His robe is dirty too. There are stains all over it. Apparently . . . they've been throwing dung at him.

His face is without expression. Very stolid. His eyes look lifeless. He stares ahead of himself as he moves on. His beard is uncombed and tangled, so is his hair. He looks as if he's half dead already. As a matter of fact he looks . . . quite *ordinary*. Yes, he . . .

. . . . . .

PROFESSOR JAIRUS?

They're here now. I'm standing about seven yards away from the stakes. I can see the three men quite clearly. I can even see the wounds around the head of Jesus. Again I can only assume. That the wounds were made by a crown of thorns, I mean. One can't be sure. The gouges appear to be still oozing blood. His temples and hair are caked with it. There's even a line of blood running down his left cheek. He looks terrible, quite terrible. I wonder if the man knows what it's like to be crucified.

They're stripping his clothes off.

They're also taking off the clothes of the two . . . thieves, I suppose they are. They might be murderers, one can't say. At any rate, they're all having their clothes taken from them. They're naked now.

He's thin, my *God*, he's thin. What brainless sort of faith prescribes starvation for a man?

Excuse my comments, gentlemen. I'm liable to make them without thinking. I have rather definite opinions on this moment and this man.

Jesus is quite emaciated. Muscular though. Quite well built. A little flesh and he'd look . . . almost excellent. Now I can see his face a little better. It's . . . rather handsome. Yes, under ideal cir-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

cumstances this man *might* be extremely handsome. One might then understand his magnetic control over people, his seeming . . . *aura* of supernatural prescience.

WHAT'S HAPPENING, PROFESSOR?

The soldiers are forcing the three men on their backs. Their arms are being extended along the cross beams. Are they to be lashed or . . .

They *were*—I mean they *are being* . . . Uh! Good God, can you hear the sound of it? Oh my God. Right through their palms! *Sickening* practice. These ancients certainly have their foul ways.

This crucifixion business—a horrible thing. A man can last three or four days if his constitution is strong enough—if he survives the impeded circulation, the headaches, the hunger, the wracking cramps, hemorrhage, sycope of the heart. Either hunger or thirst will get them, probably thirst.

I hope to heaven they don't practice crurifragium, that brutal beating to death with mallets. History says nothing of it in this case but how can anyone know? Except—the idea occurs—except *me.*

WHAT'S HAPPENING?

They're being raised. The soldiers are lifting them with the cross beams. The thieves are jumping up in order to avoid torn palms. They're roaring with anger and pain.

He can't get up. They're—oh God!—they're *pulling* him up by his nailed palms! His face has gone *white.* But he doesn't cry out. His lips are pressed together, they're drained of color. He refuses to cry out. The man's a *fanatic.*

IS THE PLACE CROWDED, PROFESSOR?

No, no, there's no one around. The soldiers are keeping people away. There are a few people but none closer than thirty yards. A few men. And, yes, some women. Three I see together. They could possibly be the three mentioned by Matthew and Mark.

But no one else. I see no man who could be John. No woman who could be the mother of Jesus. And surely I'd recognize Mary of Magdalene. No one but those three women. No one seems to care, that is. The rest, apparently, are here for the . . . the show. Good God how this scene has been garbled and obscured by pious gilding. I can—I can hardly express how *dreary* it all is, how common and ordinary. Not that killing a man this way is ordinary but . . . well, where are the portents, the signs, the miracles?

Biblical drivel.

WHAT'S HAPPENING, JAIRUS?

Well, he's been put up. The cross is, of course, not at all as pictured in religious rite. It's really a low wooden structure resem-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

bling a letter T. The stem was already in the ground as I've said and the cross beam was put on top of it and nailed and lashed. The feet of the three men are only inches from the ground. That serves the purpose as well as if it were many feet.

And, speaking of feet, the feet of the three men were lashed, not nailed to the stake. And between their legs is a—a spar, a peg. It supports their bodies. I'd rather expected one under their feet too. Apparently I'm wrong on that count.

It is—*bizarre* though, how people in our time can believe a man weighing—oh, it must be at least 170 pounds—could *hang* from a cross merely by nails through palms and feet. They attribute to the human flesh far more durability than it possesses.

Now the soldiers are . . .

WHAT ABOUT THE TITULAR INSCRIPTION, PROFESSOR?

Oh, yes, yes. Well, they *are* in three languages, it appears. There's Greek. There's Hebrew and Latin. Let me see . . . uh . . . *Jesus of . . . Nazareth*—yes—*Jesus of Nazareth. The . . . King . . . King of the Jews.* That's the complete inscription. Have you got that? *Jesus of Nazareth. The King of the Jews.* Apparently John had some factual information about the crucifixion anyway. Even if he isn't here as he claimed.

Ah, yes. The soldiers are holding a drink up to Jesus. I assume it's the soporific intended to induce stupefaction that the Jerusalem women are reputed to have prepared for all such condemned criminals.

Ah. He refuses it. He turns his head to the side. The soldier is angry. He draws back as if he means to strike Jesus. But he changes his mind.

The other two men are drinking the wine and myrrh the soldiers hold to their lips. They're smacking their lips. One of them says something. I didn't hear all of it. I heard the word *good* though. They're both smacking their lips.

One of them, apparently, is asking for the drink Jesus refused. He doesn't get it. He turns and jeers at Jesus for not drinking it. He speaks so fast I can't catch his words. I think he must be half drunk with terror anyway. Soon he'll be insensible from the drink though. That will be his release. Jesus chooses to have no release.

That's his privilege as self-appointed martyr.

YOU WERE SAYING BEFORE ABOUT THE SOLDIERS, PROFESSOR?

The soldiers? Oh—oh *yes.* They're casting lots for the clothes. I imagine I don't have to tell you that there's no robe I can see that has no seam. All three are ordinary robes with very visible seams.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Well, that seems to complete the basic details. The three are up. I'll study Jesus now a little. May I move closer?

IF YOU WISH, BUT BE ABSOLUTELY CERTAIN YOU REMAIN WITHIN THE ENERGY SCREEN.

I'll be careful. I'm moving. I'm about six yards away now. Five—three—t . . . this will do. I don't think I should . . . I don't think I'd better get any closer.

IS EVERYTHING ALL RIGHT?

Quite—quite all right. I-uh-*am* a little nervous, that's all. After all, this *is* Jesus. I almost feel as if he can—well, that's absurd. How powerful a hold superstition holds on the mind.

Yes, he's quite young. In his thirties, I'd judge. As I said, in good health and groomed, he might be a stunning figure. He might even understandably be taken for some sort of messianic deliverer.

His skin is clear. Dirty, of course, but . . . clear. His mouth is rather wide, full lipped. A strong line. His nose isn't hooked. It looks almost—oh, I don't know—almost Grecian, you might say. He *is* quite handsome. Yes. He's quite a handsome man.

The eyes are . . .

. . . . . .

PROFESSOR?

Well, at least our theories are vindicated that later description of the crucifixion is almost primarily based on prophecy. It's obvious that very little in the Bible transcription of the scene is factual. There is no John, no mother of Jesus, no Mary of Magdalene, no others supposed to be here. I've heard no words from Jesus. No one has jeered at him except that thief and that was only because the thief was angry he didn't get the second drink of drugged wine. And there are no signs.

No, I think we can safely say that the later chroniclers, intent on substantiating the old Psalms auguries, put together the account of the crucifixion with Old Testament in lap. These Psalms, the 22nd, 31st, 38th and 69th to the fore, plus Christian imagination—made the crucifixion something—*quite* different from what it actually was. From what it *is* as I stand here.

I . . . *oh*

. . . . . .

WHAT IS IT, PROFESSOR?

He just . . . *spoke.*

He spoke. He said—Eloi. He said *God* in his own language. His face is white and drawn. The lines of *pain* on it . . .

His face—it's so . . . so *gentle.* Even now in this moment of terrible pain, he . . .

Undoubtedly auto-suggested

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

hypnosis, easily effected due to his exhaustion and emotional fervor. I'm sure the poor dev—man must feel some sort of . . . violent ecstasy of pain. Maybe he doesn't even feel pain at all. Perhaps his heightened body functioning, his exacerbated adrenalin flow—prevent feeling. It's perfectly feasible. His eyes are . . . his—his eyes are . . .

ARE THERE ANY SIGNS OF NATURAL DISORDER, PROFESSOR JAIRUS?

I assume you—refer to the earthquake recorded or the dark skies or the tombs rent open or a half dozen other things spoken about in the Bible and other sources.

No, I'm afraid not.

No dark skies. The sun is still very bright and very hot. The ground is as steady as a rock. The records *err* slightly. Obviously the authors of the records weren't satisfied with this and decided to add religious significance to an otherwise unreligious moment. Hand of God and all that rot.

It makes me furious, really. Isn't the moment enough in itself? Isn't it terrible and violent enough for . . . oh, the damnable pedantry of—!

. . . . . .

PROFESSOR, ARE YOU ALL RIGHT?

What?

ARE YOU ALL RIGHT? ARE YOU FEELING ILL?

I'm . . . quite well. Thank you.

WHAT'S HAPPENING?

. . . . . .

PROFESSOR?

Those eyes. Those *eyes*. My God, they're so—they're so *hurt!* Like a father who's been beaten by his own children. Yet who still loves his children. Who's been set upon by loved ones and *stripped* and *beaten* and *nailed* and *humiliated!* Is there no—

PROFESSOR.

I'm—I'm—I'm all right. I'm quite—quite all right. It's just that . . . it *is* upsetting. This man has done nothing and—oh, my God, there's a *fly* on his lips! *Get off!*

. . . . . .

WHAT'S HAPPENING, PROFESSOR JAIRUS? ARE YOU—

They're giving him a drink. He must be horribly thirsty. The sun is so hot. I'm thirsty myself.

A soldier just dipped a sponge into a pail of *posca*, the soldiers' drink of vinegar and water. Now he's put the sponge on a broken reed which was lying on the ground. He touches the sponge to the mouth of Jesus.

He . . . sucks the sponge. His lips tremble. It must taste horrible

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

—*bitter* and *warm*. God, why don't they give him a real drink—some cool water? Have they no pity for the—

PROFESSOR, YOU'D BETTER GET READY TO COME BACK NOW. YOU'VE BEEN GONE ALMOST FORTY MINUTES ALREADY. YOU'VE DONE WHAT'S TO BE DONE.

No, don't take me back yet—not just yet. A little while. Just a little while. I'll be all right. I swear I'll be all right. J-just let me—stay here with him. Don't take me, not now. *Please.*

PROFESSOR JAIRUS.

His eyes, his eyes—*his eyes!* Oh my God in heaven, they're looking at me! He *sees* me! I'm sure of it! He *sees* me!

WE'RE BRINGING YOU BACK.

No, not yet. I'm—I must . . . I . . .

DON'T GET OUT OF THE SCREEN.

Out of the screen? Yes, maybe I can—I could . . .

YOU'RE COMING BACK.

No! No, I'll break the screen if you try to bring me back! I'll—I'll go *through* it! I swear I will—don't touch me!

PROFESSOR, STOP IT!

I've got to stop them! I've got to *stop* them! I'm here, I can save him! I *can!* Why can't I take him into the screen with me and take him away?

JAIRUS, USE YOUR HEAD!

Why not, damn it, why *not!* I'm not going to stand here and let them destroy him! He's too good, too gentle. I can save him—I *can!*

JAIRUS, YOU'VE DONE YOUR JOB! NOW LET HIM DO *HIS!*

No!

LOCK THE SCREEN.

What! What are you doing?

WE'LL HAVE TO CHANCE BRINGING HIM BACK IN THE FEW SECONDS THE SCREEN LOCK WILL HOLD.

Let me out! God help me, let me free! Stop it, you don't know what you're doing!

QUICKLY!

No! Stop—*stop!* Don't take me! *Don't!* LOOK OUT!

They dragged him, frenzied and kicking from the platform. They carried him into the office and put him down on a cot and Doctor Randall drove a syringe into his arm.

In a half hour Professor Jairus was quiet enough to swallow a glass of brandy. He sat in a big leather chair, staring straight ahead, his eyes lifeless. His mind had not returned with his body—it was still back on a lonely hill beyond Jerusalem.

There were things he could have told them; word pictures to bolster history. He could have described the clothes worn on Golgotha, the words spoken there, the moment in its bleak and brutal en-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

tirety—all this he could have told them. Told them especially that, in bringing him back so quickly, they had caused the phenomena which the Bible recorded as a quaking of earth and a renting of rocks.

None of these things did he tell them.

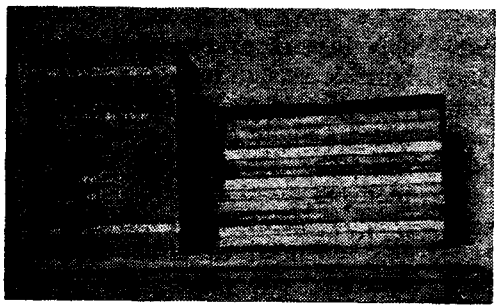
He told them he wanted to go home.

He put on his coat and hat and overshoes and walked into the grey murk of afternoon. His rubber covered shoes crunched in the hard packed snow, his eyes stared into a curtain of soft-falling snow.

The other things are not important, he was thinking. True or untrue they didn't matter. The water into wine, the lepers cleansed, the sick healed, the walking on water, the return from the grave—none of them mattered. Men who sought for hope in physical miracles only were childish dreamers who could never save the world.

A man had given up his life for the things he believed in. *That was miracle enough for anyone.*

It was Christmas Eve and it was a lovely time to find a faith.



Handsome, Sturdy

VOLUME FILES

for Your Copies of

FANTASY AND SCIENCE FICTION

Each Volume File will keep 12 copies of FANTASY & SCIENCE FICTION clean, orderly, and readily accessible. Sturdily built, the files are covered with a rich black and red washable leatherette, and the lettering is in 16-carat gold leaf.

Reasonably priced at $2.50 each, 3 for $7.00, or 6 for $13.00, they are shipped fully prepaid on a money back basis if not satisfactory. Order direct from: JESSE JONES BOX CORPORATION

Dept. F&SF • **P.O. Box 5120** • **Philadelphia 41, Pa.**

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

A welcome new story from the one-time Sage of Topanga—still (we hasten to say) as sage as ever, but now in New York, where he continues to attack all windmills, no matter how cunningly they may disguise themselves as giants.

REBEL

by Ward Moore

"SERIOUSLY, SON," SAID CALUDO'S father, not quite meeting his eye; "you aren't a child any more. Your mother and I naturally worry. Someday, when you have a family of your own, you'll understand how we—"

"You mustn't think we're narrowminded or bigoted," interrupted his mother gently, shifting her position on the couch slightly, adjusting her silver robe so its folds fell gracefully from shoulder and hip. "Remember when your cousin Tristram took up rhyming and your poor uncle was so dreadfully upset? We were the first to say the boy would pull out of it and settle down."

"And he has, he certainly has. It was just a phase and we knew it. Yes sir. Tristram has good stuff in him—but no better than you Caludo, no better than you." Mr. Smith looked directly at his son for the first time and the affection in his face was unmistakable.

"Not that we're holding Tristram up as a model," said his mother. "If you wanted to, you could easily do much better."

"That's the whole point," exclaimed Caludo earnestly. "As you say, rhyming was just a phase with him. He actually wants to do the acceptable things, while I—"

"Dear," suggested his mother, "why don't you recline comfortably instead of perching on that horrible straightbacked chair?"

"I like to sit up straight," protested Caludo hopelessly. "I don't like lying down except when I'm ready to go to sleep."

The affection in Mr. Smith's face changed to annoyance, the familiar annoyance and impatience Caludo increasingly had grown used to in the past few years. "That's just it. Never mind what anyone else does—think only of what you've decided you like. *You* like to sit up straight. *You* like to wear that outlandish

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

costume. *You* like your hair—" reflexively he tossed his own shoulder-length curls, dyed a pale blue to match the wig his wife was wearing "—that juvenile way. *You* like—"

"Now Bach," admonished Mrs. Smith. "Your bloodpressure." She rested her face prettily on a smooth-skinned arm, lightly sprinkled with irridescent powder, so that her silver-painted eyelashes just cleared the flesh, "these things are only symptoms, not too important in themselves, but added together they show—"

"They show that everyone is out of step but you," Bach Smith took it up angrily. "Just as your mother says, they're symptoms, and I blame myself for not recognizing them sooner. Why, when you were only a little kid you were outdoors in the fresh air from morning till night, playing games, exercising, trading toys with other maladjusted children instead of lying around all day with your nose in a book like any healthy boy. We only smiled when you prattled of what you wanted to be when you grew up instead of realizing we had a serious problem on our hands. We were too soft with you."

"You never wanted for anything," murmured his mother.

"Good heavens, son—do you want to be a misfit all your life? Don't you want to become a responsible member of society? Don't you think you owe other people something? Honestly, I don't understand you."

"Look, Dad, I'm sorry, truly sorry, if I'm making you and Mom unhappy. If you could only see it from my side. I can't paint or sculpt or compose—"

"You've had every opportunity. The finest teachers, all sorts of help and encouragement. It seems to me you could at least make an attempt. It isn't as if we were asking something outrageous or unheard of. Is all your education to be wasted because you just throw up your hands and say you can't? Where's your gumption? How do you know you can't?"

"Besides," said his mother before he could answer, "we don't expect you to do exactly what we do in the way we do. We're not the kind of people who think we're perfect." She looked complacently toward the wall where her husband's *Sun Otter In Very Yes Yous* hung in all its splendid color, but Caludo knew she was thinking of her own *Novella For Three Harpsichords and 95 Kettledrums* in F sharp major. In all fairness he admitted they had something. Both of them. And he was proud of them in a way. "But we don't understand why you don't want to make something of yourself. Why you can't settle down."

"But Mom, I do. Really I do. Only—"

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"Only what?" prodded his father. "Look, we're not callous or hidebound. We know youth has to experiment, yes and even defy convention now and then. It's part of growing up." His carefully made-up face looked very smug under the blue curls. He reached from his couch over to the low table and pressed the button which popped a lighted cigarette between his lips. "One for you?" he offered politely, since there was no dispenser near Caludo.

"No thanks, Dad."

"Don't you ever . . . ?" asked his mother, getting one of her own.

"No he doesn't," burst out Bach Smith. "Not even for courtesy's sake, not even to be sociable. It's the same with liquor. Why, don't you remember? It was his fourteenth or fifteenth birthday party —I forget which—and all the boys and girls were getting pleasant, and he wouldn't touch a drop? Not champagne, not a highball, not a martini—not even a little dry wine or a glass of beer?"

"But Dad, it makes me sick."

"Nonsense. It's all in your mind. Besides, do you think people should do only what they fancy? Never sacrifice their own whims to the prevailing code? Do you think your mother and I always do solely what pleases us rather than what is proper and right? Good heavens, Caludo, do you want anarchy, chaos?"

"Honestly, Dad, I'm not advocating— That is, I'm not the wildeyed dreamer you seem to think. I know most people—all our family, our friends, everyone practically with whom we come in contact—are satisfied to be novelists, poets, sculptors, musicians. I don't want to change them. I appreciate they're necessary—"

"Necessary!" cried Mr. Smith furiously. "Necessary! By—"

"Now, Bach. Please." She turned her head toward Caludo. "I'm sure you don't want to make your father ill, dear. We love you and we're proud of you even though we certainly don't understand your attitude. Don't you truly want to live a useful life?"

"Mother, don't you see? It's all in the definition of what is useful. I've agreed that for the average person, for most people, working in the arts is good enough. I just happen to want something different."

"Suppose everyone felt the way you do," argued his mother reasonably. "What would happen to the world? I can't imagine everyone abandoning commonsense, but suppose they did? What would you do for something to read, something to hear, something to look at? Surely you don't want to be a drone?"

"No, Mom. Believe me, I don't."

"Then—?"

"There are other things beside the aesthetic in life. Human be-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

ings aren't condemned only to the prosaic, the inevitable. There's a whole realm beyond the humdrum and the ordinary in which some can work happily for a lifetime."

"That sounds quite mystical, dear. Can't you be a little more specific?"

"You know what I want to do. I've wanted it ever since I was eight."

"A kid's fancy," mumbled his father. "Grow up."

"Honestly," said his mother. "You can't still—at twenty-two—want to be a-a—"

"Businessman," his father spat out. "Buying and selling. Getting rich. An eight-year-old's ambition inside a mature body. Grow up!"

"But Dad, you yourself admire the great businessmen. Everyone does. Why, in school we had hours and hours of tapes about Morgan and Vanderbilt and Wanamaker—"

"Sure. And Ford and Gianinni and Woolworth. I'm no hidebound bourgeois, son—I reverence these great men as much as you do. Maybe more. You talk of school—I never had anything but straight A's in Commerce-Appreciation. Why, I—"

"In Commerce - Appreciation they give you moldy stuff. No wonder you think the only great businessmen are dead. And that commerce is finished and done with just because it's possible to live — and live comfortably enough, I suppose, if you have no soul—without it in our times. But for some of us it isn't possible. Business means too much to us. Not just antique business or immortals like Nuffield or Astor, but living, experimenting, changing, *modern* business. Don't you see: it isn't enough to bow before Daniel Drew or Charles E. Wilson? I want to carry on their tradition."

"Caludo, you insist we are totally insensitive. Yet hardly a Sunday goes by but what I don't look over the financial page of the *Times*. I'm not someone who never gets beyond the art and theater sections or the book review. If you had said you wanted to be an architect, for instance, or anything which could be considered remotely practical, I would have—I don't say I would have been happy about it, but I would have sympathized. But this . . ."

"Dad—"

"Anyway, what makes you think you're a Drew or a Wilson? Or a Carnegie or Doheny? I guess I can throw famous names around myself when I want to."

"I don't think I'm a Carnegie or Doheny. I have no hope of anything like that. But just because I can't be a Rockefeller or a Frick doesn't mean I won't be satisfied to be the best I can. Look, I know it's hard for you to understand—"

"Oh, not as hard as you think, dear," said his mother. "I wanted

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

to be a mechanic when I was little, and your father wanted to be —you'll never guess—an accountant." She giggled; Bach Smith smiled slightly.

For the first time they were not roadblocks, jailers, enemies, but human beings who had felt, no matter how weakly, his own dominant impulses. "Maybe I came by my queer streak honestly."

His father's smile became a frown. "Perhaps you did. We all have odd ideas. But don't you get the point? We outgrew our infantile silliness before it crystallized into a social behavior and possibly juvenile delinquency—"

"I knew a girl who used to shave mustaches off collages. She had to go to I don't know how many analysts," reminisced Mrs. Smith.

"—to become mature, responsible people, fit to be parents. Perhaps you think I never had a nostalgic thought for double-entry or an adding machine—"

"Or I for a crescent wrench," put in his mother in a gay parenthesis.

"—but we recognized these for the immature daydreams they were and put them behind us. I don't say the mirage of columns of figures hasn't been transmuted into a splash of color here or a bit of draftsmanship there, or that the movement of pistons and wristpins hasn't entered into your mother's symphonies, but so have longings for other solaces we left behind in childhood or adolescence. We grew up, son. We faced the world. Sometimes it isn't easy, but being an adult has its rewards, believe me."

"I do believe you, Dad. My only question is, why should commerce be considered not grown up?"

"We can't all be wrong," said his mother. "Now can we, dear?"

Caludo struggled against the feeling of falling into warm, soft, meek acquiescence. "Of course not. Only I think—and I assure you I'm not trying to set myself against your experience or wisdom —that for some, for someone like myself maybe, it is possible to be adult and a businessman at the same time."

"Maybe it is," granted his father tolerantly. "Maybe it is. But it's a long, hard struggle, and even if you succeed, what have you got? An existence on the fringes of society. No position, no security, no solid respect outside of a circle of crackpots who talk a language no one understands and go into ecstasies over what no one else is interested in. Even putting that aside, how do you justify yourself in the meantime? How can you face the young men and women of your own age who are making names as dramatists or conductors or muralists while you pursue a financial will-of-the-wisp?"

"Maybe I could get a Gainsborough," muttered Caludo weakly compromising.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"Gainsborough?" repeated his father puzzledly.

"You know, Bach," said his mother. "A Gainsborough Fellowship. From the John Henry Gainsborough Memorial Foundation. They give aesthetic-equivalent grants to commercial people."

"Absurd. Carrying water on both shoulders. 'Aesthetic-equivalent grants' indeed! How can we hope to compete with the Martians when our best minds are tempted into romantic pursuits? You don't think *they* have fellowships to encourage dilettantes, do you? Or that *their* young people occupy themselves with trade instead of things that count?"

"How can you be so sure what counts and what doesn't?" asked Caludo, feeling he had been losing ground since he so foolishly brought in Gainsboroughs and trying to get back where they were. "Look at it this way. You say I'm no Hartford or Schwab. Agreed. But with all respect, because you're not Botticelli and Mom isn't Mozart doesn't make either of you stop your work."

For the first time his parents looked shocked. "Caludo," said Mrs. Smith finally. "It isn't the same thing. It isn't the same thing at all. We have our humble place in the world but we fill it to the best of our ability. We don't run away from life, we don't turn our back on what is real and vital and important to pursue grandiose dreams. We do our ordinary, inescapable work (do you think I never feel an impulse to shut the piano and tinker with a jetplane?) and we are respectable members of society instead of brilliant eccentrics. You can sneer at artists—oh yes you do, Caludo; you sneer at us in your heart, I know—and think we're dull and frumpy and outdated because we wear robes instead of that absurd jacket and—what is it called?—trousers you affect. Or because we dye our hair and use wigs like normal people instead of making spectacles of ourselves. Or because we go to bed at a reasonable hour instead of retiring at dark and getting up with the sun as you do—turning night into night. Don't think we haven't noticed and been ashamed lest others would, too. What do you think would happen if everyone thought as you do or acted the way you want to act?"

"I'm not asking them to," he said sullenly, hemmed in. "I find jacket and trousers comfortable. It isn't an affectation. And I like my hair cut short and undyed. It's convenient. And I get up early because—because . . ."

"Because ordinary folk like us don't!" finished his father triumphantly. "Anything to be different."

"Dad, that's not it at all. I get up because there's so much I want to do and the early hours are the best."

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"Caludo, we just don't speak the same language," said Bach Smith. "Everyone knows the morning is only fit to sleep through—that no one can possibly be alive, much less alert, before noon. And if you went to bed at a decent hour you *couldn't* get up before twelve or one."

"But . . . Gosh, don't you think there's room in the world for more than one set of values?"

"If there is," said his father, "don't you think it's up to you to show it? You ought to be willing to test your values against ours. You ought to do something better—if you really believe in your 'values' and aren't just bone-lazy and trying to skin out of work—than repeat over and over like a defective child that you want to do this and you like that. You ought to prove your values are real by mastering ours. If you really want to be a businessman you ought to show the world you have the discipline to be an artist first. Serve your apprenticeship. Paint or write or do something socially acceptable for five or ten years. Show the results of your work by the appreciation of critics and reviewers. Then, having acquitted yourself honorably in the real world, it will be time enough to enter this life of fantasy if you still have the taste for it."

"But Dad—"

"I know what you're going to say. That by then you will have lost your zest. Weren't you? That proves my point, doesn't it?"

"Caludo," said his mother, "you know your father is right. No boy so carefully brought up, so well-educated as you could help it. Listen to us who love you, who have watched over you from the moment you were born, who sat up long hours and remember your first tooth, your first step, your first words. Do what your father says. It's for your own good; deep down, you must know it. Don't disgrace us. Don't wreck your own life."

"And don't forget," added his father indulgently, "if you are determined to be a businessman you will be a better one for your experience as a poet or violinist. And if your notion persists, remember you can paint or write all night and still find an hour or two to buy and sell in your spare time. Why, now I come to think of it, I've heard of a number of quite serious people who go into commerce as a hobby. Week-end entrepeneurs you know, and don't think they haven't made good at work while getting the last ounce of recreation out of their diversion."

"You see—we're not trying to thwart you," cried his mother. "I'm sure Bach might even be willing to have a store or office or whatever built onto the studio—"

"If I see some real application," growled his father.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"So that when you're tired out after work you can relax with your money and your inventories and your checkbooks. Oh, Caludo my darling, we're only trying to help you."

"But—" he began hopelessly.

"And we won't insist on a mistress," went on his mother eagerly, "or even smoking or drinking. Except in company, naturally. And you could wear a long wig over that ridiculous haircut. And—"

"Now, now," admonished his father. "Let's not go too far. Certainly the boy can have time to fool around with investments and such. But a respectable appearance I must insist on. No more sitting stiffly in chairs as though there were something wrong with his sacroilliac instead of lounging decently. No more odd hours disrupting any sensible schedule. And a decorous toga or robe. And a little—just a minimum—makeup. After all, you owe us something."

"But Dad . . . Mom . . ."

"Say no more," said his father, pushing the button for a gin and tonic "Say no more. You're a good boy basically and I'm willing to humor you to a certain extent. You'll outgrow your commercial nonsense—you think you won't but you will—and someday you'll look back and be grateful to us for being firm with you. Remember, we love you, Caludo."

"I suppose you do," muttered Caludo bitterly, forseeing the long years of drudgery with mahlstick or baton, typewriter or paintbrush, until the bright vision of dollars and cents faded away into resigned acceptance of their drab, hopeless world. "Yes, I suppose you do. What else would justify you . . . ?"

MERCURY PRESS, Inc., 580 Fifth Avenue, New York 36, N. Y. F2

Send me The Magazine of FANTASY AND SCIENCE FICTION.

I enclose ☐ $4.50 for one year ☐ $8.00 for two years.

Name .....

Address .....

City .....Zone....State.....

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

When Anne's feet were pedalling a treadle sewing-machine, she felt that she was going somewhere. And when she found the right sewing machine, she actually did go somewhere—though it was not at all the sort of journey she had expected.

WINDOW TO THE WHIRLED

by Barry Stevens

ANNE WAS YOUNG AND SHE WAS lovely—sweeping blonde hair, sea green eyes, ivory skin, and a body that didn't need to be changed anywhere. A girl like that, and the two things that she wanted were a treadle sewing-machine and her grandmother. Why, she could have been a TV star or just about anything that most girls would give their souls to be. Anne said she'd be bored. What could be more boring, they asked her, than a sewing machine and a grandmother? That wasn't Anne's view at all.

Her grandmother had had a treadle machine and she had let Anne use it sometimes. When Anne's feet were on the treadle, one forward, one back, pedalling away, she felt that she was going somewhere. Grandmother had always had the same feeling. She wouldn't switch to an electric machine because, she said, she couldn't bear to stay in one place. Anne had never been bored when Grandma was around. They were always going somewhere together even when they sat in the living room with everyone else. Then one day Grandma disappeared, and Anne wept. But then she stopped her tears and went off to find Grandma. By the time she got to New England in search of her, she was feeling very discouraged, and when she saw an auction being held in front of a barn she stopped for diversion, unable to bear her despair.

No one knew what would be brought out of the barn next and held up for everyone to see and bid on. . . . And then there was an old treadle sewing machine. Anne started off the bidding with a quarter. Nobody else bid, and she got it for that. And suddenly she felt as though her lungs had stopped breathing. A treadle machine! Maybe *that* was the way to find Grandma.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

When the men brought it to her, she got to work on it at once, looking in the little drawers, two on each side, and sure enough! There was an instruction book in one of them, tattered, but showing how to thread the machine. In another drawer there was a little wooden shelf with holes for bobbins to set in, and there was a bobbin in each one, with thread on it—blue, green, white, red, yellow. The colored threads were oddly luminous. She'd never be able to match them, but she couldn't bear to waste them, so she used the bobbin that had some white thread on it. There was a spool of white thread too, so she threaded the upper part with that. Then she took a handkerchief out of her pocket, folded it, and stitched the two sides together. Sunlight filtered through a big elm and dappled Anne and the sewing machine with light and shade. She used the handkerchief now for a cleaning rag. There was an oil can in one of the drawers, with oil still in it. It smelled awfully good for oil—more like perfume; in fact, more like flowers. *Why* hadn't Grandma taken Anne with her? That hurt when she thought of it, and the pain crippled her so that she couldn't do anything. So then she thought about it in another way, without emphasis, inquiring, "Why didn't Grandma take me with her?" And that way it had an answer even if she hadn't yet figured out what it was.

She began to realize that she had been too logical. Grandma wasn't. And she had been trying too hard, which Grandma had always said was bad. "You just *do* things," she had explained, "and then they come out the way you want them to." The way that it had happened just now, in fact. If she hadn't stopped chasing Grandma she wouldn't have noticed the auction and wouldn't have found the machine to start her thinking in the right direction. . . . If she could have listened *only* to Grandma, Anne thought. But there were all the other people telling Anne that Grandma was out of her mind.

The sewing machine was sparkling now like the shine on well-used railroad tracks, beckoning her on to . . . When she thought about that 'to' and where it might lead, she shook her head, tossed the hair back from her forehead, and went on with her sewing. Grandma said that anything you could think about was puny by comparison with what could happen if you let it, and that thinking about what you wanted narrowed things down so that only little, usual things could happen. Then people said, "Of course. That's all there is to life. What did you expect? Flying carpets?" When Anne was inside herself and Grandma, she did, but when

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

she was inside of other people she made up her mind to be reasonable and not expect too much. She was feeling less and less reasonable now—or more reasonable in a different way.

When the sewing machine had been adjusted so that it hummed instead of clacked, Anne asked the men to put it in her car, and drove away. When she came to a fork in the road, she took the one that pleased her. In passing through a town she noticed a store and went in and bought a bedroll and a little icebox without realizing that she had changed her course from the months of sleeping in motels and eating in restaurants like everyone else. She just knew that she was strangely happy and that she wanted to get back west. But she was in no hurry about it. She stopped when she felt like it, and used the sewing machine. The things she made were more beautiful all the time. People wanted to buy them but she gave them away, saying that they were too precious to be sold because of what was sewn into them. She didn't know herself what she was talking about but she knew it was right.

People wanted her to stay, and offered her a fine place to work in, but she always sooner rather than later put her sewing machine in her car and went to another town. And another town. And another town. Until she sometimes wondered if she were making any kind of sense or just re-living a fairy tale absorbed in childhood. Sometimes it seemed to her that the fairy tale had been telling people how to live, but at other times she was doubtful about this. Then she would remember "Don't think!" and she would stop, and then she enjoyed everything around herself again.

Eventually she got to California where the weather was usually mild, and she began taking her sewing machine with her on trips to the mountains, the desert or the lakes, and there she would sit in the sun and treadle away, which wouldn't have been possible with an electric machine which tied you to a wire and a generating plant. She would leave her machine to take a swim, or to climb a mountain, and she was becoming stronger and more flexible all the time. She was also becoming more beautiful—perhaps radiant is the word—but she didn't notice that: she was too fascinated by the fact that she was learning. Things kept coming into her head. She began to understand mathematics and physics and lots of other things she hadn't bothered with because she had thought them dull. She thought of moving on to a place where there was a university, so that she could go to college, but when she spoke of this to a man who was visiting in the town, a professor from Berkeley

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

named Stan Blanton, he said, "Heavens no! You'd lose what you have, and what you didn't lose you'd be fifty years old before you'd begin to know." This was Grandma talk, and Anne felt at ease with it—and with him. He was a nice sort of person, but somewhat sad. He was fifty years old and hadn't done half the things he wanted to, because of all the things he had had to do, and he wasn't sure that the ones he had done were worth doing. This made it difficult for him to keep on doing them, so he was tired all the time, which he thought was because he was growing old.

He was very conscious of his age, so although he felt younger with Anne than he had for years and she was the nicest thing that had ever happened to him, he went away.

Anne was then a little sad, for he had seemed to have possibilities that other people didn't have. She felt separated from something. But she could always get together inside herself by working things out with the sewing machine. She might use one of the attachments that she hadn't tried, she thought. She fitted one to the machine, and took a long thin strip of material to try it out on. But no matter how carefully she sewed in a straight line, and kept the two ends of the strip apart, it always wound up with the ends together, like a belt with a twist in it, so that the outside went inside or the inside went outside until you couldn't tell which was outside or inside.

She thought she would play with the threads that she had been saving, so she took the bobbin with the yellow thread and put it where bobbins go, and took the green one and put it on top where the spool should go, so that the yellow and green threads would intermingle like buttercups in a field. But when she started to treadle, the cloth slipped out from under the foot—and the green and yellow threads went on spinning themselves together. There didn't seem to be any end to it. The two bobbins were always full. And instead of threads, it was now becoming a piece of cloth. "Oh, how I should love to have a cape of this!" she thought, and went on treadling. And the material grew. But now it was growing into a piece of very special shape, and she began to see the outline of her cape, although it was a little confusing the way the inside and the outside kept changing. Then she seemed to have done the cape, or the machine had, or they both had, for she wasn't sure how much of the spinning had come out of her and how much out of the machine, and sometimes she felt that maybe she and the machine weren't two things anyway. Machinery wasn't like

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

nature, she had always thought. Nature you could feel your way into, and know what it was to be a tree or a rock or a pool. But machines! Even treadle machines weren't something she could get *inside.* They weren't natural. But now she wasn't so sure about that. A bird's nest was natural. It was made by the bird. A beaver's dam was natural. It was made by the beaver. And machines were made by men even when they were made by machines because men made the . . .

When the cape was done, she snipped the threads which held it to the machine, feeling that she was cutting an umbilical cord. Then she stood up, started to fling the cape over her shoulders to find out how to get into it, and it wrapped itself around her.

There was a knock on her door, and she called "Come in!" And there was Stan Blanton. "What a beautiful cape!" he said, which wasn't at all what he had come two hundred miles to say. "Isn't it?" said Anne. "But I can't decide which side is inside and which side is outside or which one I am in!" She gave the cape a little flip as she said that, and it seemed to mix up its inside and outside in a quick flashing movement, and then it was gone. So was Anne.

Stan couldn't tell what he felt first, or whether they rippled all over each other like the colors on a dying dolphin. He was astonished, dismayed, puzzled, delighted, and a number of other things that he didn't bother to sort out. But when the rippling stopped, he was bereft. It had taken a tremendous effort to overthrow the forces of convention which said that he should stay away from Anne, and to break loose and come to her. And now she was gone! He sat down on a chair with his head in his hands and his elbows on the sewing machine, and tried to figure out what had happened. The answer seemed so tantalizingly near. But suddenly he began to think of other things. Anne had disappeared. Missing young girls and elderly men were meat for scandal. He'd better go back to Berkeley in a hurry. Quickly he went down the stairs and out to his car and drove home. Maybelle wasn't there. He sat down in the living room trying to think what to say to her when she came in and asked where he had been. His head ached. What *could* he say?

When Maybelle came in he looked up and said, "Hello, dear," as usual. She said, "Hello dear," also as usual, and went upstairs as usual.

This made him mad. "After all I've been through!" he thought. And then he got even madder as he realized that he hadn't been through anything but a lot of nonsense that hadn't happened anywhere but in his head. He

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

dashed out of the house and down the street, feeling like a fool, after all the years he had sat quietly in a chair resolving his problems in a mature way and arriving at sane conclusions. Now he suddenly saw all those years as submission to something he really didn't give a damn about, and how *mature* was that? He had felt that he was taking things into his own hands when he left Anne's place abruptly, but he had been a puppet, pushed around by all the stuff that he had no use for. He should have *stayed,* and tried to find Anne.

Anne was back in her room right after he left, actually—if by 'actually' you mean according to *our* time. *She* had been gone for weeks, and found this very refreshing. After that she spent more and more time looking into other places, and her absences began to be noticed by the neighbors. Next time she disappeared, someone called the police and said she was missing and foul play was suspected. No one thought anything of the kind, but they wanted to find out about Anne, and 'foul play' was a signal you used to get the police moving into other people's affairs. Stan was the only conceivable 'man in the case', so they tracked him down in Berkeley. Maybelle left him, which was both satisfying and convenient.

Anne's picture appeared in the papers, along with Stan's, not that there was evidence that he had anything to do with her disappearance but it made a good story. Stan, disgusted, yelled, "It's phoney! *Everything's* phoney!" which of course people did not wish to believe because it included themselves, so he 'told all' just to show them. After that, he was permitted to stay at home but he was examined by psychiatrists. He was lying in bed one night, far from sleep, when . . .

Anne suddenly appeared beside his bed and said, "What do you mean, talking about me that way, as if I were a curiosity!"

Stan wasted no time on words, which could come later, and were more likely to if he acted first. He reached out, grabbed the cape and whipped it over her head, saying, "Stick around for awhile."

Anne laughed. "I've been places and learned things," she said—and disappeared.

Mournfully he spread the cape on top of the bed and leaned back against the pillows. Before his eyes, it whipped off the bed and wrapped itself around Anne, who was suddenly there laughing at him again. "I can only disappear without it," she said. "I can't go anywhere." Now that she had the cape, she did.

Stan was coming to his senses, now that he wasn't trying to do or be or live up to anything in particular. He dressed and went to

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

the place where Anne had lived and claimed her sewing machine. In the nearest motel, he started studying how to use it. When he got as far as the moebius strip, the rest was easy. Then he went to Anne's room 'to look for something.' It would be perfectly easy to find Anne. All he had to do was start from where she had been and glide down the strip to where she was. He put on his cape, and gave it a flip as Anne had done.

It was wonderful in nowhere, the place between everything. He hadn't known it would be this glorious—like being the only ship on an ocean, or the only skater on a frozen Lake Michigan. He had had dreams like this, but had dismissed them as thinkless wishing. Swooping, swerving, curving—and all on nothing, so that there was no possibility of falling off. He began to feel a zestful eagerness, a curiosity about where he might find himself when he slid off the strip and into Anne. Would she be surprised!

Zing!

He was in his own room, right at the spot where Anne had been. But Anne was not there. What a fool! He tossed his cloak on the bed and sat on it, and pulled his hair with his hands. He was so oppressed by failure that it didn't occur to him that all he had to do was take off again. Where *would* she have gone? Past and present, future too, and she could be anywhere in anywhen of them. He'd been so *sure* he had got it figured out, and all that he had done was to follow himself home. He had a sudden harrowing thought that maybe that was all he could do.

He got up from the bed and paced the floor, then went downstairs, not that it made any sense but he had to do something so that he wouldn't be so certain that he wasn't doing anything. He sat down in a chair and rubbed his eyebrows with the heels of his hands—*hard*. This time, he wasn't going to start with *any* preconceived ideas. As they arose in his mind, he wiped them out, one by one, until there was nothing left. But what help was a blank? He shook his head angrily, then thought "The hell with her. I'm going to do something *I* want to do." And he ran upstairs, swirled his cloak over his shoulders, and went skating down the strip through the clouds of nowhere to somewhere he had always wondered about.

It was morning when he arrived. A bright clear beautiful morning, crisp and sharp as autumn and with the soft warmth of summer in the air. Tall buildings, towering in isolation, stood out against the sky. Around each of them were areas of low buildings, with lawns and trees. People walked the streets in clothes as soft and bright as flowers, making his own conspicuously dull.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Quickly he got back on the strip and returned to the motel where he had left the sewing machine and let it weave new clothes for him. Putting them on, he replaced the cape on his shoulders and skated forward to where he had been, where he was inconspicuous now. But even so, he felt a sense of loneliness. At moments, in passing close to someone, this loneliness departed, but then it returned. He wanted to join with other people, and since some of them were going toward one building, he went there too. It seemed to be some kind of theatre or hall. There were no posters or canopy signs, so he walked a little closer to the man nearest him and asked, "What's playing today?"

The man stopped, and a smile began to play about his face. Then he said quickly, "I'm sorry, I thought you were one of us. I don't quite know the words to use to explain to you. This is a sort of playground, I suppose. Would that be right?" Stan looked baffled, so the native tried again. "We drop in when we want to, and listen or otherwise take part in the play as we like. There's nothing written down. We just . . . I really don't know how to say it because I've never had to before. We take part in it when we like and drop out when we like. It's great fun."

"Fun!" said Stan. "It's confusing! How do you know where the play begins or ends or is going?"

"What a strange view," mused the native. "What ever begins or ends, or knows where it is going? . . . Although I suppose that one could see things that way if one took a very limited view. But how unrealistic."

"Unrealistic!" said Stan, out of great confidence that he knew what realism is. "Why, you're just *drifting!*" But his own very recent life came into his mind then, and he wasn't so certain. Still, he couldn't quite yield, so he said magnanimously, "That's just in your plays, of course."

"Well, no. As a matter of fact, our playing partly serves to keep us in touch with reality. I don't mean that is why we do it. We enjoy the play, and that's reason enough. But also we carry over some of the spirit of reality into our work, and this keeps us from becoming too serious about what is, after all, very transient and limited."

Stan turned this over in his mind. It took a good bit of turning. "Are all your plays like this?" he asked. "No hard-working actors giving their lives to their profession?"

This time, the native looked confused. "Why on earth," he said at last, "should anyone give his life to a *profession?*"

"To make things better," said Stan.

"And did it? I think that you must be from *then,*" said the na-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

tive. "A most tragic era—all misunderstanding."

"What did we misunderstand?" asked Stan with eagerness. The native said nothing. "Don't tell me that 'If you gotta ask, you'll never git to know' " Stan cried.

"No," said the native, "I could, but I won't. But tell me, how did you get here?" and he moved away without waiting for an answer. He looked back at Stan as though inviting him to follow, but Stan did not notice. His mind was a massive ache from ideas that seemed to be standing on their heads. Then they went into a tumbling act in which everything moved so fast that he couldn't tell which was upside down and which right side up. Anne was suddenly his only possible anchor in chaos. He started walking rapidly down the street. If he could just find her! Then he slowed. That's what he must get out of his mind—finding Anne. He felt a twinge as he realized that if she had passed him then she would have recognized where he was—or wasn't—and would have gone by without speaking to him. He restrained himself from turning to see if she were behind him, and brought himself into the *now* of all his senses so that he was noticing everything in the instant in which he lived. Then, he noticed that he was hungry. What could he do about that, when his money couldn't be used here? What about numismatists? There were phone booths around so he went into one. The directory seemed awfully small. He looked in the front for instructions and happily discovered that all he had to do was dial Numismatists for the information he wanted. A screen in the wall lighted up, and there were all the numismatists listed. Continuing to follow instructions, he took a piece of paper from a peculiar pad beside the telephone and held it in front of the screen. In an instant, the information was transferred, and he left the booth with the paper in his hand. A thought struck him, and he went back into the phone booth and dialed "coin dealers." The same list appeared on the screen. Now *that* was intelligent.

All the dealers were on the same street, so all he had to do was find the street. The first man he asked said courteously, pointing with his hand, "Go two blocks down, and ask again." When he asked again, the man pointed in another direction and said, "One block down, and ask again." At the next stop when he asked, the man pointed down a street and said, "Lane on the right side, halfway down the block."

It was so blessedly simple!

He walked into the first store that appealed to him, since he didn't know anything about any of them anyway. The man behind

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

the counter looked at the money Stan gave him and handed it back, saying, "Third store to the right. He'll give you a better price than I can."

Stan looked at him in astonishment. "Why?"

"He has a customer who'll pay more."

"But don't you want business for yourself?"

"Certainly," said the man, "but that's no reason you shouldn't get all you can for this."

Stan went out of the store a little unbelieving. There was a woman ahead of him in the next store, and he noticed that she was offering the same kind of money that he had. He'd probably get less for his, now, if he got anything at all. There didn't seem to be any bargaining going on. The woman and the clerk were both admiring the money, and then the clerk put her money in a box under the counter, opened another box and counted out some other money into the woman's hand. She took it and walked toward the door. As she passed him, Stan noticed her eyes. They reminded him of someone a little, but not entirely. Maybe the eyes were the same and the hair was different, which made the eyes look different. Anyway, he didn't know anyone here. He went to the counter, and the clerk took the money and said happily, "Two in one day! Sometimes we have to wait for years! I can give you a little more for this than I gave Mrs. Chumley because Mr. Sringo will be so happy that he doesn't have to postpone his journey any longer. He has enough now to make the trip."

"But where can he use *this* money?" Stan asked.

"In the twentieth century, of course. You people who come from the past are all right because old money is real, but when we go into the past, our money is phoney."

Stan took the new money the clerk held out, and walked toward the door. As he passed the spot where he had noticed the woman's eyes, several things clicked together at once. "Anne!" he thought. But no, that wasn't right; this woman was much older than Anne. He was putting two and two together and making twenty-two. Still, there was a nagging at the back of his neck, insisting that he was at least a *little* right. He went back to the clerk. "Do you have Mrs. Chumley's address?"

"No more than I have yours."

Stan started toward the door again, and the clerk called after him, "She did say something once about 'the children' in a way that made me think she might be a teacher."

There weren't any conspicuous signs of restaurants along the streets, but here and there on what looked like a private house there was a discreet sign saying

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"Diners welcome." He walked into one of them and found himself in a small hall, from which he could see a room with one large round table in it, at which a number of people were seated. The food on the table looked and smelled awfully good, and made him want to walk right in and take a vacant chair, but the people were all chatting like old friends. That made him want to join them too, but on the other hand . . . He hesitated, standing there in the hall, but the sign *had* said "Diners welcome," and he couldn't see anything else to do but walk in and sit down. So he did.

"Hello there!" said one of the men, in a friendly but quite unbumptious way. "We were just talking about . . ." cueing him in on the conversation. Food was passed to him. The talk was about affairs strange to him, but as it went on, he began to feel at home in it. As some people finished eating, they left, leaving some money at their plate. A maid came in and took their dishes and the money, glanced over the table to see which serving dishes needed to be refilled. Other people came in and sat down, and the conversation rolled right along, covering a most astonishing lot of ground. And as he got his bearings, he began to say something now and then, for it was possible sometimes to point out a fallacy even though one didn't really know what they were talking about. He had noticed that as a child, but then no one would listen to him. Here, they did, and laughed when he showed up a mistake. Correcting the mistake, they took up from there, and went on. There were pauses, too, when no one was talking, which seemed to be the times when they were listening most of all. He got something from these pauses. It was as though his mind cleared and information came into it in a nice uncluttered way. When Stan went out into the sun, he felt refreshed and free and living in a larger world than he had known before.

Mrs. Chumley left the store where she had exchanged her money and went back to school, humming. She'd done it again. There must be a time in the past when her luck would run out, but it hadn't yet, so she was enjoying it.

The children greeted her with joy. They were special children, but no one knew that but themselves and Mrs. Chumley. They were listed at the School Board as exceptional children, a term carried over from the mid-twentieth century when 'exceptional' was first used for children who were not. She took out the money and put it on the desk, and the children came up and each one of them put some of it in their pockets. Then they went outside and scattered, each in a different di-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

rection, and each one of them bought something insignificant—just usual things that any parent might send his child out to buy, parts to fix a copter or a house conditioner or a speedplane.

When they returned to school, they all got together in a room that already had something in it partly made, and went to work, adding the new parts in places which would have astonished the people who knew all about copters and house conditioners and speedplanes. Mrs. Chumley watched. She enjoyed the children at work, intent on what they were doing. When she first started working with them, she had pretended to be baffled. It was good for them. For some time now, she hadn't had to pretend.

When the doorbell rang, Mrs. Chumley wondered who on earth that might be. She got up to go to the door, while the children left their work and scattered around the room and picked up books and began reading. They were all arranged in small groups, with older ones pointing things out to younger ones, the way that any good public school was run. There was The Machine, yes, but Mrs. Chumley had begun with usual machines, and explained that she was using them to teach the children, and when they got more complicated it would have taken an expert or a simpleton to notice that they were different.

"Mrs. Chumley!" said Stan. "I'm so happy to find you!" And he looked so happy that Mrs. Chumley was happy too. Besides, this seemed to be something different, and to something different there was only one possible thing for Mrs. Chumley to say, and she said it: "Do come in!" As she led him to the classroom she said, "I'd rather hoped that someone else would find me, my granddaughter, but I guess she's not as bright as I thought she was. Sometimes I've thought I should have brought her with me, but then she never would have found her own way." She sighed. "I guess she didn't, anyway."

Stan looked at Mrs. Chumley more intently, particularly at her eyes. "Anne?" he asked.

"Yes," said Mrs. Chumley, "that's my name. Ohhh! You mean *Anne!*"

"I think I do," said Stan. "I wouldn't be here if it hadn't been for her."

"I'm so glad!" said Mrs. Chumley, sinking into a chair. "I thought I'd given her enough to go on, but it *is* difficult to hold your own back there, so sometimes I wondered if I had been wrong. But as long as she's got started, she's all right, even if she hasn't arrived. Who has, after all? Tell me about it." And Stan did. That is, he started to, but then he became aware of the children listening. Mrs. Chumley waved to him to

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

continue. "We have no secrets," she said. "That is, I don't have any from them."

When Stan had finished, Mrs. Chumley explained about the children and herself.

"I thought this was an *enlightened* world!" Stan exclaimed.

"Oh, it is," said Mrs. Chumley," but they've got so used to it they've forgotten that it could be *more* enlightened."

"So you're getting things out of a rut, I suppose."

"Well, I suppose I am." said Mrs. Chumley, "but that's not *why* I'm doing it."

Stan walked over to the machine, and the children gathered around him, with expressions on their faces that he was trying to understand. He tried to look intelligent as he asked, "And what is this to be used for?"

"It already has been," said one of the older boys. He looked around at the other children. "Has everyone got it?" They all nodded their heads or said Yes, and he checked them over one by one to see that no one was left out. Then, "Okay!" he said, and the children began taking the machine apart, stacking the pieces in neat rows on the floor.

Mrs. Chumley watched, delight on her face. "They've really got it!" she said.

"What?" asked Stan.

"I don't really know," said Mrs. Chumley, "but they haven't tried anything with interstellar travel, so that might be it."

"You said they'd got it," protested Stan, "so surely you must know what it is."

"They've got the basic idea," said Mrs. Chumley. "It's sort of like doing arithmetic problems on paper so you can then do them in your head. After that, you don't need paper. Sometimes I thought they never *would* work it out."

"Why didn't you tell them?"

"Because then they would have been able to make use of it only in a limited way. They'd never get *beyond* it if they didn't figure it out for themselves."

Stan looked bewildered. Mrs. Chumley looked sad. "You *could* understand," she said, "if you'd just let go of what you think you know. Everything you can do outside, you can do inside—that's where it came from. Most people stop at outside. That's why Berkeley, California, 1961, still has telephone wires and stuff."

"It seems to me," said Stan, "like a mental moebius strip."

"You've got it!" she said.

"Oh, no, I haven't," he corrected.

"But you have—you couldn't have said it outside if you hadn't had it inside, and now all you have to do is get it back in." She turned to the children. "I'm going home, now. I assume you're not. Tell me about it when you get back."

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"Don't they even thank you for all you've done for them?" asked Stan.

"Why should they?" asked Mrs. Chumley. "Do you know, at this moment I haven't the faintest idea what I'll be doing next?"

Stan was beginning to get the feeling of it as he held the door open for her, then walked beside her to the street. How wonderful that he had arrived just when she was about to start on something else! What fun to go along!

But at the corner she left him, saying "Goodbye" as casually as if she would see him tomorrow.

"But about Anne!" he called after her, trying to hold her. "I'm sure she's on her way!"

"I'm so glad," Mrs. Chumley's voice wafted over her shoulder.

"But where shall she find you?"

"How do I know, when I don't know where to find myself until I'm there?" And she was gone.

All the adventure went out of him again. He rushed back to the school and asked the children, "Where does Mrs. Chumley live?"

"Wherever she feels like," they told him.

"I've got to find her!"

The children looked at him curiously, as though he were a person who had got pushed out of shape. Then a trace of compassion appeared on the face of one of the girls, and she said gently, "How did you find her the first time?"

At the store! . . . But she might never go there again. He was missing some piece that was there but he wasn't seeing it.

"Let go of it," the girl said, "and it will come to you."

And then the missing piece came into his mind: he had been taking care of the need of the moment when he ran across Mrs. Chumley. But it might be so long before their paths crossed again.

"When there's no other way," the girl said, "that's the only way there is."

Stan felt humble before this child. She knew so surely, so completely, what he only glimpsed at times and then lost. "Thank you," he said, and left.

He had a lot to think about, and he wished he knew what it was. It began to come into his mind that with both Annes he was just riding along with them, like an old man trying to recapture his youth through the youth of someone else. When they left him, he was old again. But he *had* recaptured it in and by himself for awhile. How had he done it?

He wandered the streets, not knowing where he was going or what was around him, until he came to a basking place. There was a long wall, facing the sun, and there were benches against the wall, all of the same material that caught the warmth and held it. He sat down on one of the benches, then stretched out on it, letting

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

the warmth from beneath and above seep into him—so that his muscles relaxed, and in letting go off his body he also released his mind.

Why was it so difficult for him to be *on his own?* It seemed so easy for Anne and her grandmother, and when he was with them, he . . . No, when he was with them, he went along with them, but he wasn't *free* as they were.

Someone came and sat quietly at the end of the long bench. He didn't open his eyes. But he let go of his thoughts for awhile, and listened. He heard little crunching, crackling sounds, and then the wings of birds as they came fluttering down, then their feet on the pavement, and their beaks pecking, their little jumps as they bumped into each other and then stepped back, only to move forward again. "They do everything so easily," he thought. "Why shouldn't that be true for people?" People had to work for a living and raise children, to be sure, but why was it so *difficult?* Shouldn't it be as easy for humans in their way as it was for the birds in theirs?

Why were people so *stupid?* he asked, as he let roll into his mind all the things that he had been keeping out of it. Graduate School, he suddenly realized, was probably not the isolated, special group that he had thought it. Probably everywhere else was the same, with its enshrined incompetents of which he had been one. Oh, he had recognized the others. The one he had failed to recognize was himself. He hadn't started out that way. He was never going to be like his professors.

He groaned as he remembered a graduate student, bright but rebellious (Stan winced now, at that 'but'), who had designed and used a seal that had on it an opened book and a lighted candle, with the words: Help Stamp Out Graduate School. Stan had talked ot the student about 'professional dignity.' The student had said, "I don't like that word 'dignity.'" Stan realized now that the 'dignity' that he had recommended was nothing but pretentiousness. The student had told him so, but he hadn't heard. Not at the time. The student had said, "You're just being *nice,* and *polite.* Can't you be *human?* And Stan had said, so reasonably (so smugly, it seemed to him now), "You'll see things in a different way, later on."

"I hope not!" the student had said, as most students did not. "What I don't understand," he went on, "is why you won't let people *think.* When anyone does, you clip his wings and think you've tamed him—if he stays. But what you've taken *out* of him is how to fly."

"The requirements of research . . ."

"I don't want to do *re*search,"

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

the student had interrupted. "I want to *search*. But it's submit or get out, so I'm getting out."

Again Stan shuddered in the sun. What *was* man? When he was young, he had been trying to find out. Then he had accepted a role, had become an actor on a stage with an assigned part to play. Assigned *by whom?* When he was young, he had seen another destiny for himself. And as he reunited with that youth now and let it sweep over him, he ached with a new and different kind of pain. He sat up and blew his nose because otherwise there would be tears in his eyes, and men don't cry.

Putting his handkerchief back where it belonged, he sat leaning forward, with his hands clasped between his knees, remembering things he didn't want to remember. For what he had taught was courage, but what he had *lived* was bowing to 'the rules.' Once he had heard one student say to another. "And another stone idol topples into the steaming jungle," and they both had turned away.

How had he got into this mess? At first he had submitted to the rules to get through grad school, so that he would have a degree and people would listen to what he had to say. But when he got his Ph.D., he saw that he would have to get into the upper brackets: *then* people would listen. But when he had got a Name, by sacrificing most of himself for twenty years, people listened only when he said what they expected him to say. Any deviation was dismissed as brought on by age or overwork. The holidays when he met Anne were the only time he could remember when he had truly spoken from himself—out of his *own* knowledge.

He sobbed. Let anyone think what they wanted to think, or thought that they should think. What mattered was what he knew in himself. The more he sobbed, the clearer it became, like a child who cries his way out of confusion and into sunlight again.

He began to be aware of things around him, of passing feet, of the pigeons still fluttering around him. A pigeon flew onto his shoulder, and he turned his head slowly toward it, feeling no difference between himself and the pigeon. Then, "Mrs. Chumley!" he exclaimed to the woman sitting at the end of the bench.

"It isn't miraculous," she said. "I went back to school for a book and the children said you looked as though you'd stop at the first backing place."

"You walked away from me, before."

"Wasn't that a good thing, too?"

He burst out laughing with the glory of a child, a cosmic laughter that embraced so much more than words could say that he made no attempt to say them. "I feel so

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

small and so big," he said, a little later.

"When you feel small and big in the right places," said Mrs. Chumley, "you're just where you belong. I'm hungry."

At dinner, people were making the most wonderful sense and fun until someone mentioned the children who said they'd been to the stars when they'd only been gone for awhile between school and supper. Mrs. Chumley put her hand reassuringly on Stan's thigh. "Don't be bothered," she said. "The children knew what to expect. Probably they told the truth to find out if I knew what I was talking about. Now they'll believe everything I told them. I hope I was careful."

"I thought it was *better* here!" Stan said *sotto voce.*

"It is. It won't take them long to discover their mistake and they'll laugh and zoom ahead."

Anne had skated into town earlier, and it had been easy to guess who the 'teacher' was that the children said had shown them the way to the stars. She went to the school and got the feel of Grandma and wandered around until she got a whiff of her through an open window. That is, she heard Grandma's voice. Walking in, she joined Stan and Grandma at the table saying, "And how do you do, Mrs. Chumley? Where did you pick up that name, by the way?"

"From an Englishman," said Grandma. "He said he would be proud to give me his name, so I took it. Sit down and eat. There's something I want to talk over with Stan." And to Stan she said, "You're going back?"

"Of course," he told her. "I've got to clean up a mess I made. I thought I would begin by rounding up all the students who wouldn't listen to me."

Mrs. Chumley shook her head. "They'll have fallen for the same thing somewhere else where it looked different. You'll be just an old man, now, who's out of his mind. When you sell yourself down the river, you have to like the river. Then you like spinach even though you hate the stuff. There's going to have to be a new school, and everyone's tired of 'new schools' and getting nostalgic for Emerson, so you might call it Heisenberg College—he's sort of bringing Emerson up to date. It will take money. There's a reasonably young man—never even got a Master's—who's now president of one of the big foundations. . . ."

"What do you know about *now?*" asked Anne. "I mean, now *then?*"

"I haven't stayed here *all* the time," said Grandma, "and even if I had, I'd know more about now *then* than is known there now. There's a lot of nonsense in the history books, but some things do

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

come through later which weren't seen at the time. You could see the same thing in your own life if you'd look," she rebuked Anne. "I've been back several times. I worked for Schraffts, and they cater to the big foundations—luncheons and stuff. I've been in on *lots* of luncheon meetings, and had trouble holding my tongue, too.

"This man's more open than the others," she told Stan. "I'll give you a list of people who've been writing—all saying the same thing but in so many different ways that people haven't got them together yet. You get them together, scoop the cream from what they have to say, and present it to this man. . . ."

"Grandma!" protested Anne. "You're tampering with the past!"

"Tampering!" snorted Grandma. "That's the word people use when they mean 'Don't grease the wheels, we might get somewhere.' Besides, it's already happened, so how can I be tampering?"

She turned back to Stan, and began scribbling names on a piece of paper. Stan looked over the names and registered mild shock. "*Those* men!" he protested. "They don't give credit to the men whose shoulders they stand on!"

Anne, with a forkful of salad on the way to her mouth, stopped her hand in midair. "Maybe you mean whose umbrellas they got out from under?"

"I'm sorry. How long does it take to get over being a professor?"

"You've changed!" said Anne with delight. "Oh, Stan!"

"You can talk to him later," said Grandma. "Now what you do, Stan, is . . . and I'm not telling any secrets or pushing you around, because you could read this part for yourself if you went to the library. There's still a lot you have to work out on your own because history is also full of the way things didn't happen." She went on scribbling names, and he was surprised how many of them there were. He knew the work of most of them but had dismissed it for one 'reason' or another, like not citing sources, going against established authority, too mystic, in some cases they didn't even have a doctorate. Now, their work was rearranging itself in his mind, and he could see what the founders of religions had been trying to get at appearing in another form, a form much more comprehensible to the Twentieth Century. And it was coming through in so many different places! He looked again at Grandma's continuing list, and put out a hand to stop her writing. "Those people write science fiction!" he said. "They're escapists!"

Grandma sat back and laughed. Anne took out a cigarette, made a pass with her hand over the tip of it,and the tip burst into a glow. "It's a trick," she said, "That I learned in the future."

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Stan's laughter burst over theirs. "All right, Grandma. Go on."

"That's all, really. The rest you have to figure out for yourself." Then she turned to Anne: "Have you started working on the mental hospitals yet?"

"That was to be my surprise!"

"It will surprise Stan," said Grandma, "and I'm interested too, because no one seems to know just how it started."

"I worked in several of them before I found the right one to get things moving," Anne told them, "but it's going well now. Some patients have got themselves transferred to other hospitals and are beginning to work things out there. It was quite simple, really. It always is, when you find the place to begin. We just expand everything a little more, and a little more, so nobody notices, so they don't pay any attention to the *direction* of the expansion. The head men are too busy writing papers, anyway. By the time they notice what's happened, they'll think they did it themselves. Probably they still won't notice that it's a school—no degrees, no credits, no teachers, everybody just learning from each other and from everything else, and not for anything but the people in it.

"The 'patients' come from all kinds of jobs, so when they go back to work, everything changes a little. They're changing the work . . . I mean . . . Oh," she said with annoyance, "what does it matter what's changing what? It's *changing*."

"But how do people from your hospitals manage to work in the places that are filled with the old ideas?" Stan asked. "I should think they'd crack up."

"Some of them do," said Anne, "but they get sent back to us then and in a sane society they're all right, and as soon as they're strong enough they go out again. And sometimes, it's easy. They're train . . . Won't we *ever* get over using the wrong words?" she asked herself crossly. "They're given a chance to become themselves, and that's what a lot of other people want to be too. One woman went to work in a place just before Christmas, and she found that for thirty years everyone had been giving everyone in the place Christmas presents. She thought she would go crazy if she got into that, so she went around telling everyone, 'I'm not going to give you anything for Christmas, so don't you give me anything for Christmas or I'll be embarrassed.' She wasn't trying to change anything. She was just speaking for herself. And pretty soon everyone was going around saying to everyone else, 'I'm not going to give you anything so don't you . . .' They said it was the *nicest* Christmas they'd had in years. They were happy clear through January."

"Everyone?"

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"Well, no. There was one old biddy who did a lot of the hiring and firing, and she was the one who told new employees about the custom, so they thought they had to follow it. She's still upset—other things aren't going her way either—and I hear she's developing cancer. I mean, she really is, and probably won't live very long, but that's better than *everybody else* developing cancer."

"It's going to be fun, going back," said Stan.

"Sometimes you won't think so," Grandma told him. "You'll think that none of these things are happening at all, that you built it all up to make life endurable, that it's all imagination. You'll doubt yourself and your own sanity. Maybe you'd better take along some of those cigarettes Anne has found, so you can wave your hand over one of them and know it's real."

"Couldn't I use you, instead?" Stan asked. "You're the most reassuring thing I know."

Grandma said nothing.

Anne said, half-miserable, half-enchanted, "You aren't coming back with us?"

"There's *nothing* in the history books about me," said Grandma. "I'm completely free."

"And . . .?" Stan was trying hard to guess but was fairly sure he couldn't.

"There's a blank space somewhere ahead. I've been farther than that, so I know. Nobody knows what happened."

"So you're going there, to find out. Isn't that risky?"

"I hope so," said Grandma.

For life . . .

Recently we were flattered to receive inquiries about the cost of a lifetime subscription to FANTASY AND SCIENCE FICTION, and we agreed to accept such orders at the very reasonable price of $50.00.

A Certified Life Underwriter of our acquaintance reports that, based on present life expectancies, this is a good buy for any male of fifty or younger and an even better buy for any female of fifty or younger. Write: J. W. Ferman, Publisher, 580 Fifth Avenue, New York 36, N.Y.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

SCIENCE

Dr. Asimov, aware of a growing concern about where we'll all put our heads down if the population continues its mad growth, here explores settlement-space possibilities around us.

SUPERFICIALLY SPEAKING

by Isaac Asimov

FOR THE LAST CENTURY, SERIOUS SCIENCE FICTION WRITERS, FROM Edgar Allan Poe onward, have been trying to reach the Moon, and now governments are trying to get into the act. It kills some of the romance of the deal to have the project become a "space spectacular" designed to show up the other side, but if that's what it takes to get there, I suppose we can only sigh and push on.

So far, however, governments are interested only in *reaching* the Moon, and as science fiction fans we ought to remain one step ahead of them and keep our eyes firmly fixed on *populating* the Moon. Naturally, we can ignore such little problems as the fact that air and water are missing on the Moon. Perhaps we can bake water out of the deep-lying rock and figure out ways of chipping oxygen out of silicates. We can live underground to get away from the heat of the day and the cold of the night.

In fact, with the Sun shining powerfully down from a cloudless sky for two weeks at a time, solar batteries might be able to supply Moon colonists with tremendous quantities of energy.

Maybe the land with the high standard of living of the future will be up there in the sky. Perhaps, etched into some of the craters, large enough to be clearly seen through a small telescope, there will be a

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

message that starts: "Send me your tired, your poor, your huddled masses yearning to breathe free—"

Who knows?

But if the Moon is ever to be a second Earth and is to siphon off some of our population, there is a certain significant statistic about it that we ought to know. That is, it's size.

The first question is, what do we mean by "size?"

The size of the Moon is most often given in terms of its diameter, because, once the Moon's distance has been determined, its diameter can be determined by direct measurement.

Since the Moon's diameter is 2,160 miles and the Earth's is 7,914 miles, most people cannot resist the temptation of saying that the Moon is ¼ the size of the Earth, or that the Earth is 4 times the size of the Moon. (The exact figure is that the Earth is 3.66 times the size of the Moon.)

All this makes the Moon appear quite a respectably sized world.

But, let's consider size from a different standpoint. Next to diameter, the most interesting statistic about a body of the Solar system is its mass, for upon that depends the gravitational force it can exert.

Now mass varies as the cube of the diameter, all things being equal. If the Earth is 3.66 times the size of the Moon, diameter-wise, it is 3.66 x 3.66 x 3.66 or 49 times the size of the Moon mass-wise. (Hmm, there's something to be said for this Madison Avenue speech monstrosity, convenience-wise.[1])

But that is true only if the densities of the two bodies being compared are the same.

As it happens, the Earth is 1.67 times as dense as the Moon so that the discrepancy in mass is even greater than a simple cubing would indicate. Actually, the Earth is 81 times as massive as the Moon.

This is distressing because now, suddenly, the Moon has grown a bit pigmyish on us, and the question arises as to which we ought really to say? Is the Moon ¼ the size of the Earth or is it only 1/81 the size of the Earth?

Actually, we ought to use whichever comparison is meaningful under a particular set of circumstances, and as far as populating the Moon is concerned, neither is directly meaningful. What counts is the surface area, the *superficial* size of the Moon.

On any sizable world, under ordinary circumstances, human beings will live on the surface. Even if they dig underground to escape an un-

[1] *Literature-wise, what?*—K E

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

pleasant environment, they will do so only very slightly, when compared with the total diameter, on any world the size of the Earth or even that of the Moon.

Therefore, the question that ought to agitate us with respect to the size of the Moon is: What is its surface area in comparison with that of the Earth? In other words, what is its size, superficially speaking?

This is easy to calculate because surface area varies as the square of the diameter and here density has no effect and need not be considered. If the Earth has a diameter 3.66 times that of the Moon, it has a surface area, 3.66 x 3.66 or 13.45 times that of the Moon.

But this doesn't satisfy me. The picture of a surface that is equal to 1/13.45 that of the Earth isn't dramatic enough. What does it mean exactly? Just how large is such a surface?

I've thought of an alternate way of dramatizing the Moon's surface and that of other areas and it depends on the fact that a good many Americans these days have been jetting freely about the United States. This gives them a good conceptual feeling of what the area of the United States is like and we can use that as a unit. The area of all 50 states is 3,628,000 square miles and we can call that 1 USA.

To see how this works, look at Table 1, which includes a sampling of geographic divisions of our planet with their areas given in USAs.

Table 1

Geographic Division	Area (in USAs)
Australia	0.82
Brazil	0.91
Canada	0.95
United States	1.00
Europe	1.07
China	1.19
Arctic Ocean	1.50
Antarctica	1.65
South America	1.90
Soviet Union	2.32
North America	2.50
Africa	3.20
Asia	4.70

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Indian Ocean	7.80
Atlantic Ocean	8.80
Total Land Surface	17.50
Pacific Ocean	17.60
Total Water Surface	36.80
Total Surface	54.30

Now, you see, when I say that the Moon's surface is 4.03 USAs, you know at once that the colonization of the Moon will make available to humanity an area of land equal to four times that of the United States or 1¾ times that of the Soviet Union. To put it still another way, the area of the Moon is just about halfway between that of Africa and Asia.

But let's go further and assume that mankind is going to colonize all the Solar system that it can colonize or that is worth colonizing. When we say "can colonize," we eliminate, at least for the forseeable future, the "gas giants"—that is, Jupiter, Saturn, Uranus and Neptune.

Their chemistry is completely alien; their atmosphere is of unknown depth—but almost certainly very deep; what solid surface may exist may in each case consist of a layer of ice thousands of miles thick; the gravitational fields are so strong that maneuvering in their vicinity will be ruinously expensive in terms of energy. The heck with them.

That still leaves four planets: Mercury, Venus, Mars, and (just to be complete—and extreme) Pluto. In addition, there are a number of sizable satellites, aside from our own Moon, that are large enough to seem worth colonizing. These include the four large satellites of Jupiter (Io, Europa, Ganymede and Callisto), the two large satellites of Saturn (Titan and Rhea), and Neptune's large satellite (Triton).

The surface areas of these bodies are easily calculated and the results are given in Table 2, with Earth and Moon included for comparison.

Table 2

Planet or Satellite	Surface Area (USAs)
Earth	54.3
Pluto	(54) ??
Venus	49.6
Mars	15.4
Callisto	9.0
Ganymede	8.85

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Mercury	8.30
Titan	7.30
Triton	6.80
Io	4.65
Moon	4.03
Europa	3.30
Rhea	0.86

As you can see, if we exclude the Sun and the gas giants, there are a round dozen bodies in the Solar system with a surface area in excess of 1 USA, and a thirteenth with an area just short of that figure.

The total surface area available on this baker's dozen of worlds is roughly equal to 225 USAs. Of this, the Earth itself represents fully one quarter and the Earth is already colonized, so to speak, by mankind. Another quarter is represented by Pluto, the colonization of which, with the best will in the world, must be considered as rather far off.

Of what is left (about 118 USAs), Venus, Mars and the Moon make up some five-ninths. Since these represent the worlds that are closest and therefore the most easily reached and colonized, there may be quite a pause before humanity dares the Sun's neighborhood to reach Mercury, or sweeps outward to the large outer satellites. It might seem that the extra pickings are too slim.

However, there are other alternatives, as I shall explain.

So far, I have not considered objects of the Solar system that are less than 1,000 miles in diameter (which is the diameter of Rhea). At first glance, these might be considered as falling under the heading of "not worth colonizing" simply because of the small quantity of surface area they might be expected to contribute. In addition, gravity would be so small as to give rise, perhaps, to physiological and technological difficulties.

However, let's ignore the gravitational objection. In a science fiction magazine we can always suppose that artificial gavity fields can be set up. Let's concentrate on the surface area instead.

Are we correct in assuming that the surface area of the minor bodies is small enough to ignore? There are, after all, 23 satellites in the Solar system, with diameters of less than 1,000 miles and that's a respectable number. On the other hand, some of these satellites are quite small. Deimos, the smaller satellite of Mars, has a diameter of not more than 7½ miles.

To handle the areas of smaller worlds, let's make use of another unit.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

The largest city of the United States, in terms of area, at least, is Los Angeles, which covers 450 square miles. We can set that equal to 1 LA. This is convenient because it means there are just about 8,000 LAs in 1 USA.

In Table 3 are presented the surface areas of the minor satellites of the Solar system. (I'll have to point out that the diameters of all these satellites are quite uncertain and that the surface areas as given are equally uncertain. However, they are based on the best information available to me.)

Table 3

Satellite (Primary)	Surface Area (LAs)
Iapetus (Saturn)	4,450
Tethys (Saturn)	3,400
Dione (Saturn)	3,400
Titania (Uranus)	2,500
Oberon (Uranus)	2,500
Mimas (Saturn)	630
Enceladus (Saturn)	630
Ariel (Uranus)	630
Umbriel (Uranus)	440
Hypperion (Saturn)	280
Phoebe (Saturn)	280
Nereid (Neptune)	120
Amalthea (Jupiter)	70
Miranda (Uranus)	45
VI (Jupiter)	35
VII (Jupiter)	6.5
VIII (Jupiter)	6.5
IX (Jupiter)	1.5
XI (Jupiter)	1.5
XII (Jupiter)	1.5
Phobos (Mars)	1.5
X (Jupiter)	0.7
Deimos (Mars)	0.4

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

The total area of the minor satellites of the Solar system thus comes to just under 20,000 LAs or, dividing by 8,000, to about 2½ USAs. All 23 worlds put together have little more than half the surface area of the Moon, or, to put it another way, have just about the area of North America.

This would seem to confirm the notion that the minor satellites are not worth bothering about, but—let's think again. All these satellites, lumped together, have just a trifle over 1/6 the volume of the Moon and yet they have more than half its surface area.

This should remind us that the smaller a body, the larger its surface area in proportion to its volume. The surface area of any sphere is equal to $4\pi r^2$, where r is its radius. This means that the Earth, with a radius of roughly 4,000 miles, has a surface area of roughly 200,000,000 square miles.

But suppose the material of the Earth is used to make up a series of smaller worlds each with half the radius of the Earth. Volume varies as the cube of the radius, so the material of the Earth can make up no less than eight "half-Earth's", each with a radius of roughly 2,000 miles. The surface area of each "half-Earth" would be roughly 50,000,000 square miles, and the total surface area of all eight "half-Earth's" would be 400,000,000 square miles, or twice the area of the original Earth.

If we consider a fixed volume of matter, then, the smaller the bodies into which it is broken up, the larger the total surface area it exposes.

You may feel this analysis accomplishes nothing since the 23 minor satellites do not, in any case, have much area. Small though they are, the total area comes to that of North America and no more.

Ah, but we are not through. There are still the minor planets, or asteroids.

It is estimated that all the asteroids put together have a mass which is about 1 percent that of the Earth. If all of them were somehow combined into a single sphere, with an average density equal to that of the Earth, the radius of that sphere would be 860 miles and the diameter, naturally, 1,720 miles. It would be almost the size of the satellite, Europa, and its surface area would be 2.6 USAs, or just about equal to that of all the minor satellites put together.

However, the asteroids do not exist as this single fictitious sphere but as a large number of smaller pieces and here is where the increase in surface area comes in. The total number of asteroids is estimated as high as 100,000, and if that figure is correct, then the average asteroid has a diameter of 35 miles, and the total surface area of all 100,000 would then come to as much as 130 USAs.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

This means that the total surface area of the asteroids is equal to slightly more than that of the Earth, Venus, Mars and Moon all lumped together. It is 7½ times the area of the Earth's land surface. Here is an unexpected bonanza.

Furthermore, we can go beyond that. Why restrict ourselves only to the surface of the worlds? Surely we can dig into them and make use of the interior materials otherwise beyond our reach. On large worlds, with their powerful gravitational forces, only the outermost skin can be penetrated and the true interior seems far beyond our reach. On an asteroid, however, gravity is virtually nil and it would be comparatively easy to hollow it out altogether.

I made use of this notion in a story I once wrote[1] which was set on an asteroid called Elsevere. A visitor from Earth is being lectured by one of the natives, as follows:

"We are not a small world, Dr. Lamorak; you judge us by two-dimensional standards. The surface area of Elsevere is only ¾ that of the State of New York, but that's irrelevant. Remember we can occupy, if we wish, the entire interior of Elsevere. A sphere of 50 miles radius, has a volume of well over half a million cubic miles. If all of Elsevere were occupied by levels 50 feet apart, the total surface area within the planetoid would be 56,000,000 square miles, and that is equal to the total land area of Earth. And none of these square miles, Doctor, would be unproductive."

Well, that's for an asteroid 50 miles in radius and, consequently, 100 miles in diameter. An asteroid that is 35 miles in diameter would have only about 1/27 the volume and its levels would offer a surface area of only 2,000,000 square miles, which is nevertheless over half the total area of the United States (0.55 USAs, to be exact).

One small 35-mile-diameter asteroid would then offer as much living space as the moderately-large satellite, Iapetus, if, in the latter case, only surface area were considered.

The material hollowed out of an asteroid would not be waste, either. It could be utilized as a source of metal, and of silicates. The only important elements missing would be hydrogen, carbon and nitrogen, and these could be picked up (remember we're viewing the future through rose-colored glasses) in virtually limitless quantity from the atmosphere of the gas giants, particularly Jupiter.

If we imagine 100,000 asteroids, all more or less hollowed out, we could end with a living space of 200,000,000,000 square miles or 55,000 USAs. This would be more than a 150 times as much area as

[1] *"Male Strikebreaker," Original Science Fiction, January, 1957*

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

was available on all the surfaces of the Solar system (excluding the gas giants, but even including the asteroids).

Suppose the levels within an asteroid could be as densely populated as the United States today. We might then average 100,000,000 as the population of an asteroid and the total population of all the asteroids would come to 10,000,000,000,000 (ten trillion).

The question is whether such a population can be supported. One can visualize each asteroid a self-sufficient unit, with all matter vigorously and efficiently cycled. (This, indeed, was the background of the story from which I quoted earlier.)

The bottleneck is bound to be the energy supply, since energy is the one thing consumed despite the efficiency with which all else is cycled.

Now at the present moment, virtually all our energy supply is derived from the Sun. (Exceptions are nuclear energy, of course, and energy drawn from tides or hot springs!) The utilization of Solar energy, almost entirely by way of the green plant, is not efficient, since the green plant makes use of only 2 percent or so of all the Solar energy that falls upon the Earth. The 98 percent unutilized is not the major loss, however.

Solar radiation streams out in all directions from the Sun and when it reaches the Earth's orbit, it has spread out over a sphere 93,000,000 miles in radius. The surface area of such a sphere is 110,000,000,000,000,000 (a hundred and ten quadrillion) square miles while the cross-sectional area presented by the Earth is only 50,000,000 square miles.

The fraction of the Solar radiation stopped by the Earth is therefore 50,000,000/110,000,000,000,000,000 or just about 1/2,000,000,000 (one two-billionth).

If all the Solar radiation could be trapped and utilized with no greater efficiency than it is now on Earth, then the population supported (assuming energy to be the bottleneck) would mount to two billion times the population of the earth or about 6,000,000,000,000,000,000 (six quintillion).

To be sure, the energy requirement per individual is bound to increase, but then efficiency of utilization of Solar energy may increase also and, for that matter, energy can be rationed. Let's keep the six quintillion figure as a talking point.

To utilize all of Solar radiation, power stations would be set up in space in staggered orbits at all inclinations to the ecliptic. As more and more energy was required, the station would present larger surfaces, or there would be more of them, until eventually the entire Sun would be

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

encased. Every bit of the radiation would strike one or another of the stations before it had a chance to escape from the Solar system.

This would create an interesting effect to any intelligent being studying the Sun from another star. The Sun's visible light would, over a very short period, astronomically speaking, blank out. Radiation wouldn't cease altogether, but it would be degraded. The Sun would begin to radiate only in the infra-red.

Perhaps this always happens when an intelligent race becomes intelligent enough, and we ought to keep half an eye peeled out for any star that disappears without going through the supernova stage; for any star that just blanks out.

Who knows?

An even more grisly thought can be expounded. From an energy consideration, I said that a human population of six quintillion might be possible.

On the other hand, the total population of the asteroids, at an American population density, was calculated at a mere ten trillion. Population could still increase 600,000-fold, but where would they find the room?

An increase in the density of the population might seem undesirable and, instead, the men of the asteroids might cast envious eyes on other worlds. Suppose they considered a satellite like Phoebe, with its estimated diameter of 200 miles. It could be broken up into about two hundred small asteroids with a diameter of 35 miles each. Instead of one satellite with a surface area of 120,000 square miles, there would be numerous asteroids with a total internal area of 400,000,000 square miles.

The gain might not be great with Phoebe, for considerable hollowing out might be carried on upon that satellite even while it was intact. Still, what about the Moon, where hollowing would have to be confined to the outermost skin?

It has a greater mass than all the asteroids put together, and if it were broken up, it would form 200,000 asteroids of 35-mile diameter. At a stroke, the seating capacity, so to speak, of the human race would be tripled.

One can envisage a future in which, one by one, the worlds of the Solar system will be broken into fragments for the use of mankind.

But, of course, Earth would be in a special class. It would be the original home of the human race, and sentiment might keep it intact.

Once all the bodies of the Solar system, except for the gas giants and Earth, are broken up, the total number of asteroids will be increased

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

roughly ten-million-fold and the total human population can then become the maximum that the energy supply will allow.

But, and here is the crucial point, Pluto may offer difficulties. For one thing, we aren't too certain of its nature. Perhaps its makeup is such that it isn't suitable for breaking up into asteroids. Then, too, it is quite distant. Is it possible that it is too far away for energy to be transmitted efficiently from the Solar stations to all the millions of asteroids that can be created from Pluto, out four billion miles from the Sun?

If Pluto is ignored, then there is only one way in which mankind can reach its full potential and that would be to use the Earth.

I can see a long drawn out campaign between the Traditionalists and the Progressives. The former would demand that the Earth be kept as a museum of the past and would point out that it was not important to reach full potential population, that a few trillion more or less people didn't matter.

The Progressives would insist that the Earth was made for man and not vice versa, that mankind had a right to proliferate to the maximum, and that in any case, the Earth was in complete darkness because the Solar stations between itself and the Sun soaked up virtually all radiation, so that it could scarcely serve as a realistic museum of the past.

I have a feeling that the Progressives would, in the end, win, and I ring the curtain down with the advancing work-fleet, complete with force-beams, preparing to make the preliminary incision that will allow the Earth's internal heat to blow it apart as the first step in asteroid-formation.

Somehow, I find the thought insupportable. Let's start working now to increase the efficiency with which power beams can be angled through space so that we can use Pluto instead, and leave poor Earth alone. (We've done enough to it already.)

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

BOOKS

BATTLE FOR THE STARS, Edmond Hamilton, Dodd, Mead & Co., $2.95

TIME IS THE SIMPLEST THING, Clifford D. Simak, Doubleday Science Fiction, $3.95

A WAY HOME, Theodore Sturgeon, Pyramid Books, 40¢

Back in the thirties, when the science fiction writers and editors used to lunch informally once a week, this department was a cockamaymee tyro who listened in awe to the conversation of the greats: Otto Binder, the writing half of Eando Binder; Manley Wade Wellman, who always had a glass of wine and a hundred Southern anecdotes on tap; Malcolm Jameson, every inch the naval officer, and his pretty daughter who turned all heads; and Edmond Hamilton, an austere gentleman with a hairline moustach.

These, among others, were the solid authors who kept the old *Thrilling Wonder, Startling, Astounding,* and *Amazing Stories* in business. We remember asking an editor what particular quality these authors had that made them so valuable. He replied: "Consistency. They may seldom write a great story, but they never write a bad one. We can always depend on them."

After thirty-five years of writing science fiction Mr. Hamilton still justifies that editor's judgment. In BATTLE FOR THE STARS he has not written a great novel, but he most emphatically has not written a bad one. It is solid, dependable space-opera, packed with incident and conventional, yet sharp, characterizations. It is an adventure of power politics far in the future, with Earth as the bone of contention, and a nostalgia for the old planet in protagonists, ten generations removed from Earth, as the motivating force.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

All this sounds familiar, we're sure, but it has been written by an Old Pro on the Old Planet, and neither will ever let you down.

IN TIME IS THE SIMPLEST THING, Clifford Simak has invented an interesting situation. Because of radiation barriers, man finds that it is impossible to get off Earth and survive. Physically, he is barred from the stars. But he has devised Operation Fishhook, a technique whereby explorers' minds can be thrown thousands of light years out into space to explore the stars and their planets.

The danger of this, as Fishhook explorer Shepherd Blaine discovers in the very first pages, is that there are alien creatures in space who can sense the presence of these explorers from Earth, and parasitize their minds, giving them paranormal powers. (*Hi, pal,* it said. *I trade with you my mind.*) And on an Earth which already has a telepathic civilization, such paranormal men are feared and hated.

The novel then develops into a battle between the benignly contaminated Blaine, and the operatives of the reactionary Fishhook, with all Earth thrown into an hysterical frenzy. The story is, of course, in the conventional persecution pattern; but we must point out again, with pleasure, that Mr. Simak is the one science fiction author who consistently refuses to adopt the cliché that aliens are, *ipso facto,* enemies. It reveals a sane and admirable aspect of his character; he is genuinely civilized.

The vanity of this department is so gigantic that we can't believe that the rest of the world does not share our admiration for Theodore Sturgeon, and does not, like ourself, yearn for a uniform hardcover edition of his works to treasure. This does not mean that we're knocking the Pyramid softcover collection, A WAY HOME, which includes nine fine stories of the Maestro, plus a scintillating and penetrating introduction by Groff Conklin. We're grateful for it, and you will be, too.

A WAY HOME contains: "Unite And Conquer," "The Hurkle is a Happy Beast," "Bulkhead" originally entitled "Who?" and "Thunder And Roses." There are, of course, six more, all familiar, but demonstrating a significant aspect of Mr. Sturgeon's genius; no matter how often you've read his stories, you're always delighted to read them again. Our university English professor, speaking of the evil of sequels, once said: "Not more, but again, is the test of the great story." Mr. Sturgeon proves this. —**Alfred Bester**

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Excerpts from the Latterday Chronicle

By Lewis Turco

#A1-0001-INTR

Frankly
the manuals are moving in
and their only sin is their gear-
ing
you know
too low for waltz time.

#A1-0002-INTR

Where the thickets burst
with wheels and the cogs bloom
and the greasy sap runs
down the steel stalks
there are screwdrivers waiting
to drive.

#B2-0001-MAIN

Don't mind that one don't mind
his whirring
he's nuts but he'll
run out of gas soon
and they'll check his circuits.

#B2-0002-MAIN

Have you heard about old
X2404-3BL
who married YW-304
and went haywire after work
one day
killing 3DW-6208½ & B3-
9067¼ his youngest?

#B2-0003-MAIN

They say she liked her
graphite a little too well
and he used to beat her when
she
spun out of an evening
till she rolled home to mother

#B2-0004-MAIN

There's water in the cellar
and baby won't practice her
tuning fork in the playroom
and if we don't watch out
she'll be getting rusty.

#B2-0005-MAIN

Met 59W-Z3-1202 downtown
so we had lunch and I
paid for his bucket of bolts
but don't worry he gave me
cigars
and I blew them out my smoke-
stack.

#Z9-0001-FINI

You know those furry little
whutchamadoozits that get
stuck in the works out in the
country
sometimes well
they say not so many get caught
any more.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Matthew Grass is a new writer who has here come up with a classically simple little story subject to such a variety of interpretations that we think it best to offer no further introductions whatsoever. . . .

THE SNAKE IN THE CLOSET

by Matthew Grass

IT WAS MARCH 21, THE FIRST day of spring, and his birthday, when he discovered the snake in the closet.

The sky was overcast and, despite the vernal equinox, it had snowed the evening before, turned to a fine drizzle during the night, and the morning was chill and damp. It wasn't a very nice day for a birthday but he didn't really mind for he had forgotten all about it. Besides, he was thirty-two that day, not an important natal date in most people's mind; certainly not having the implications of a twenty-first, or fortieth, or any even-numbered birthday that begins anew the arithmetical progression. Yesterday he was thirty-one, today he was thirty-two, next year he would be thirty-three: it was all and the same to him.

Had he left his apartment the first time he started out he might not have made the discovery until weeks later, or, as he later reasoned, maybe not at all. But as he was half-way down the stairs he decided that perhaps he should wear his lined raincoat rather than his overcoat, so he turned back and re-entered his apartment.

Since he had been wearing his overcoat nearly every day that winter, it hung in the same closet with his suits. His raincoat hung in his second closet, the one near the front door. He didn't use this closet much except as an extra storage space. Actually, the closet was practically empty; he wasn't a collector of "things"—golf clubs, tennis rackets, card tables, suitcases . . . articles that spend most of their days in storage.

He had stepped into the closet —it was a deep, walk-in closet— taken his raincoat off the hanger,

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

put his overcoat on the same hanger, and was just about to step back and close the door when he saw it.

Although it was coiled in the back left hand corner of the closet it covered the floor entirely on the left side; in fact, its tail was only inches from his feet.

He stood there transfixed; the usual first impulse supposedly felt in situations like this—to flee—didn't occur to him. He just stood there, mouth half open, staring at the beast, which placidly regarded him through dull membrane-covered eyes.

Suddenly becoming conscious of his fear, he stepped quickly back and slammed the closet door. He stood before the door for a moment, trembling, and then sank to the floor like a boneless lump of flesh.

When he awakened a few minutes later, he sat up with his back against the closet door. Then he leaped to his feet, his raincoat still under his arm, and ran from the apartment leaving the front door ajar.

He hurried to the corner and waited impatiently for the bus. He was behind schedule now and would probably be late for work; he had never been late in the eight years he had been employed at the firm.

He walked into the office exactly at nine: his record for punctuality was sustained. A few people mentioned to him that morning that he wasn't looking well, and he noticed himself that he had difficulty focusing on the columns of figures he was checking. Though he tried to blot out his mind's eye picture of it, he nevertheless clearly recalled the snake in the closet.

By lunchtime he had regained his outward composure. He mentioned the snake in the closet to no one.

When he returned to his apartment that evening, his first thought was how to keep the snake from getting out of the closet. As long as the door was closed there was no chance of its getting out; the space between the floor and the bottom of the door was too narrow for the snake to squeeze through. Of course, he realized that sooner or later he would have to open the door, but he would have to face that contingency when it arrived. For the moment he would just have to remember not to open the door.

Later that evening, however, he decided to look into the closet. Some means, though, would have to be devised so that he could open the closet door and see what was to be seen without endangering himself.

He finally figured out a method to effect this: a mirror would be so placed to allow him to see into the closet from six or eight feet away. He would place an oversized armchair so that he could kneel behind it. The final prob-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

lem to overcome was how to open the door—a rope would be needed. He would have to fasten a rope on the door knob so that he could turn the knob while kneeling, safely behind the chair, and also be able to close the door from the same position. Since he had no rope, he would have to wait until the next day.

The next day was Friday, his shopping day. Living alone and being rather close with his money, he found that cooking his own meals was less costly than dining out. Every Friday he bought his week's provisions at a near-by super-market.

It wasn't until his purchases were being tallied that he remembered the rope. The most suitable that he could find was clothesline rope, although he hated to buy a whole length of it—thirty feet—since he needed only ten or twelve.

When he got home, he carefully put away his groceries and set about building his contrivance. He had also bought some eyelet screws to fasten into the door to obtain a sort of pulley effect, to give him leverage to open and close the door more easily.

He wasn't too adept with his hands and his knowledge of the simple principles governing pullies and levers was vague; so that he made an evening's chore of what should have been fifteen minutes work.

It was after ten before he completed his appartus. It had evolved from an originally simple plan of merely a rope tied to the door handle, to a complex maze of screws and ropes.

He felt that his machine had to work properly the first time; if not, there might be no second chance to test it. He found himself becoming quite nervous as he settled into position behind the chair. He decided a cold glass of water would help to calm him. As he crossed in front of the closet door, he tripped over the tangle of ropes which he hadn't yet pulled taut. As he pitched forward he turned his head and saw the closet door slowly swing open.

He tried to lunge forward to push the door closed but a sharp pain in his ankle stopped him in mid-motion. He fell back on his elbow, his face contorting with pain from his throbbing ankle. Then the awareness of the now open closet door caused him to forget his ankle and peer anxiously into the semi-dark recesses of the closet. The snake was there, coil upon coil of it.

He had heard that by staring firmly at a snake one could master it; or at least keep it at bay. Fighting the rising panic within him, and mindful of his temporary crippled condition, he stared fixedly, and, he thought, to be fearlessly, at the snake in the closet.

The snake seemed uninterested in him and his stare. It regarded

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

him for a moment and then looked aside. He lay there a moment, perplexed. The snake's reaction, or lack of reaction, baffled him. He hadn't really known what to expect, but this complete ignoring of him by the snake considerably nonplussed him; he didn't know what to do.

Finally, his poise returning, he realized the futility of the situation; he would have to do something. Cautiously he moved his good leg toward the door. The snake paid no attention to him. He grew bold and with one hearty kick he slammed the door shut.

After he had crawled to a chair and taken off his shoe and sock, he massaged his tender ankle; nothing seemed to be broken. Later that evening when he tested his ankle he found that although it pained him a little when he put his full weight on that foot, it wasn't really a serious injury and would probably be better the next day.

Late the next afternoon, before going to a friend's home for dinner, he squatted behind the chair, the bureau mirror in place before the closet door, to test his door-opening machine. After a little preliminary confusion assorting the ropes so that he knew exactly which one was to be pulled to obtain the particular desired results, he made a last check of the angle of the mirror and returned to his operational point behind the chair. He pulled on one rope and the door knob turned; holding the first taut, with the other hand he pulled a second rope and the door swung open.

In the mirror he saw the snake; its position hadn't perceptibly altered since he had last seen it. As before, the snake made no movement toward the open door, and although it seemed to be looking directly at the mirror, it gave no indication of surprise, or even awareness, that it was gazing at his likeness.

He sat and watched the snake for a few minutes. Then, realizing that he would be late for his dinner engagement if he didn't leave immediately, he gave a tug at the third of his ropes and the door swung smoothly back, the latch clicking into place.

At his newly married friend's home that evening, his host and hostess noticed nothing different about him. He was quiet all evening, but then he had always been rather quiet; in fact, he seemed to get quieter with each passing year. When he was in college he was animated enough so that he was socially acceptable. In those days, however, his interests had been quite varied; if he wasn't working in the university's newspaper office, he was practicing on the basketball court or rehearsing for a play with the dramatic society. He was always busy, he was always involved with some project. His friends had been displeased

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

when he wasn't voted "Man Most Likely To Succeed" by his graduating class, but he accepted it good-naturedly.

Now, of course, he did nothing. He existed. As the years passed and each year took on an aura of sameness, he turned more and more inward. He lost touch with his friends one by one, until his only friend—though more an acquaintance than a friend—was one of his co-workers. And now that he had recently married, their contacts were fewer; an invitation to dinner every month or so was the extent of their socializing.

So, he sat quietly at dinner and then quietly through the evening and finally left to return to his apartment and the snake in the closet.

As the days passed he spent more and more of his time watching the snake. At first, he would look to see if the snake was still there when he returned from work in the evenings. Then he began to look at the snake again before going to bed. After a while these cursory examinations became half-hour studies. By the end of a month he was spending nearly the whole of his evenings crouched behind the chair, gazing into the mirror. He found it impossible to read—he had seldom gone out before, spending most of his time at home, reading—he couldn't concentrate for more than a few minutes. Finally, he became impatient for the time to pass when at work. Now, he watched the clock, fidgeted at his desk, and even made occasional mistakes in his ledgers; a few times, when the waiting became intolerable to him, he left early—unprecedented in his years of employment.

These manifestations of discontent didn't go unnoticed by his employers. When they had hired him, eight years before, they had anticipated his rapid rise; they had looked forward to his success, for they felt the addition of some young vibrant blood would resuscitate their solid, but stagnant, practice. They had soon seen, however, that although he was steady, although he was meticulously thorough, his abilities were limited to functions of rote, not to endeavors requiring aggressiveness or imagination. Regularly, they increased his salary as they did with all their employees, but they paid him no special notice. He became just another worker, one of many who did the inevitable minutiae in the office, a necessary adjunct to their firm as long as he competently performed his duties.

But now, with his recent remissness, they began to eye him with disdain. He had certainly never been invaluable; he was adequate, that was all. At the moment, he was less than adequate, and therefore, no longer desirable to the firm.

When he was informed of his

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

dismissal, he received the information with complete equanimity. He left at noon, pleased at the unexpected boon of the extra hours to spend before the closet door. Of late, he had taken to placing a chair directly in front of the closet —his rope device falling into disuse—and sitting staring at the creature for hours.

Now, he would not have to leave his apartment for days at a time, and then only to buy food. He ate even less now, so that his trips to the food market were less frequent than they had been.

He now left the closet door always open. The snake never ventured forth, nor even seemed conscious of the door being open. He began to place bowls of food on the floor just inside the closet, but they weren't touched. He couldn't understand how the snake could exist without food; he thought that perhaps it foraged for itself in the walls of the house during the night. One night he sat up and watched, but the snake didn't leave its spot.

The snake in the closet remained unchanged, but he grew thin from insufficient food and sleepless nights. He seldom even bothered to go to bed; when he did, he would lie in bed still watching the snake. He arranged a lamp so that its light filled the dusky corners of the closet revealing the snake in all its unblinking torpor. His entire existence seemed to depend on the snake—the snake that did nothing but lie quietly coiled in the corner of his closet.

One morning at the end of the summer he awakened from a restless sleep. His eyes turned to the open closet. The lamp had gone out and the dull day didn't penetrate the dark confines of the closet; he couldn't see the snake from his bed. He walked to the closet and, squinting, made out the motionless form of the snake. He felt that something had changed.

The snake had all its immensity; but there was something different about it. The snake's head was resting on its body; the eyes were sightlessly glassy rather than dully alive. He reached out and touched the snake: it was lifeless.

He sat quietly before the closet door gazing at the dead snake. After an hour he closed the door and removed the ropes. He cut a three-foot piece of rope and inexpertly fashioned a noose. Walking to the center of the room, he stood on a chair and passed the rope through the grating of a hot-air ventilator in the ceiling.

Standing on the chair after testing the strength of the grating, he placed the noose around his neck, tightened it, checked the knot fastening the rope to the grating, and with a smooth motion swung off the chair, toppling it with his feet.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Edgar Pangborn's silence on the science fiction front in the last year or so was due to his finishing a largish project— THE TRIAL OF CALLISTA BLAKE, *a non-science fiction novel having to do with capital punishment, which St. Martin's brings out this fall. The novelet herewith has to do, not with the end of a man, but with the birth of one . . . and it is a pleasure to welcome Mr. Pangborn back.*

THE GOLDEN HORN

by Edgar Pangborn

MOHA, WHERE I WAS BORN, IS mainly a nation of farms, grouped around their stockade villages throughout the hill and lake and forest country. I grew up in Skoar, one of Moha's three cities, which lies in a cup of the hills near the Katskil border. Even there things move with the seasons and the Corn Market trade; wilderness whispers at the city's borders, except where the two roads, the Northwest and the East, carry their double stream of men, mule-wagons, soldiers, tinkers, wanderers.

Farming's heartbreak work in Moha, same as everywhere. The stock give birth to as many mues as anywhere else, the labor's long sweat and toil and disappointment wearing a man down to old age in the thirties, few farmers ever able to afford a slave. But the people scrape along, as I've seen human beings do in places worse than Moha. I'm older, I've traveled, I've learned to write and read in spite of that mystery's being reserved to the priests. Looking back, I sometimes wonder if Moha wasn't the happiest land I ever knew.

The other cities—I've never visited them—are Moha City and Kanhar, both in the northwest on Moha Water. Their harbors can take big vessels up to thirty tons. the ships that trade with Levannon and the Katskil ports on the Hudson Sea. Moha City is the capital and Kanhar is the largest, twenty thousand population not counting slaves. Fifty miles south of Kanhar is Skoar, and there I was born squalling and redheaded

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

in one of those houses that are licensed but still supposed not to exist. In such places they don't have time for kids, but since I was a well-formed chunk of humanity and not a mue, the policers took me from my mother, whoever she was, when I was weaned, and dumped me in the Skoar orphanage, where I stayed until I was nine, old enough to earn a living.

I'm thinking now of a day in middle March when I was past fourteen, and slipped away before dawn from the Bull-and-Iron where I worked as yard-boy, bond-servant of course, two dollars a week and board. I was merely goofing off. We'd gone through a tough winter with smallpox and flu, near-about everything except the lumpy plague, and a real snow in January almost an inch deep—I've never seen such a heavy fall of it before or since. There was even a frost in February; people called it unusual. In the stable loft where I slept I just thought it was damn cold. I remember looking out the loft window one January morning and seeing icicles on the sign over the inn door—a noble sign, painted for Old Jon Robson by some journeyman artist who likely got bed and a meal out of it along with the poverty-talk that Old Jon saved for such occasions. A fine red bull with tremendous horns, tremendous everything, and for the iron there was a long spear sticking out of his neck and he not minding it a bit.

The wolves sharpnosed in close that winter. Mostly grays, but a pack of blacks wiped out an entire farm family in Wilton Village near Skoar. Old Jon Robson would tell every new guest the particulars of the massacre, and he's probably doing it yet, along with tales about a crazy redheaded yard-boy he had once. Well, Old Jon had connections in Wilton Village, knew the family the wolves killed and had to make a thing of it, clickety-yak. I never knew him to keep his mouth shut more than two minutes—one day when he was sick with a sore throat. He wouldn't shut it when he slept, either. He and Mam Robson had their bedroom across the wagon-yard from my loft, and in mid-winter with the windows shut tight I could still hear him sleep, like an ungreased wagon-wheel.

Before sun-up that March day I fed the mules and horses. I reasoned that somebody else ought to get his character strengthened by doing the shoveling. It was a Friday anyhow, so all work was sinful, unless you want to claim that shoveling is a work of necessity or piety, and I disagree. I crept into the main kitchen of the inn, where a hard-boy wasn't supposed to appear. Safe enough. Everybody would be fasting before church—the comfortable way, in bed. The slave-man Judd who was

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

boss of the kitchen wasn't up yet, and the worst he'd have done would have been to flap a rag and chase me ten steps on his gimp leg. I found a peach pie and surrounded it for breakfast. You see, I'd skipped fasting and church a good deal already—easy because who cares about a yard-boy?—and the lightning hadn't located me yet. In the store-room I collected a chunk of bacon and a loaf of oat bread, and started thinking. Why not run away for good?

Who'd be bothered? Maybe Jon Robson's daughter Emmia would, a little. Cry, and wish she'd been nicer to me. I worked on that as I stole out of the inn and down the long emptiness of Kurin Street, dawn still half an hour away. I worked on it hard. I had myself killed by black wolf, and changed that to bandits, because black wolf wouldn't leave any bones. There ought to be bones for somebody to bring back. Somebody who'd say to Emmia: "Here's all that's left of poor redheaded Davy, except his Katskil knife. He did say he wanted for you to have that if anything happened to him." But bandits wouldn't have left the knife, rot them. I had a problem there.

Emmia was older than me, sixteen, big and soft like her papa only on her it looked good. How I did cherish and play with that rosy softness in the night!—all in my fancy, dumb-virgin as a baby cockerel, alone in my loft.

I was gulping by the time I passed the town green, but as I neared the Corn Market, in North District and not far from the place where I knew I could climb the city stockade with no guard seeing me, most of that flapdoodle drained out of my head. I was thinking sharp and practical about running away for real, not just goofing off the way I'd done other times.

A bond-servant, one grade better than a slave, I'd be breaking the law if I ran, and could be made a true slave for it, likely with a ten-year term. I told myself that morning what they could do with the law. I had the bacon and bread in a sack strapped across my shoulder. My Katskil knife hung in a sheath under my shirt, and all the money I'd saved during the winter, five dollars in silver, was knotted into my loin-rag. Up in the woods on North Mountain where I'd found a cave in my lone-wanderings the year before, other things lay hidden—ten dollars safely buried, an ash bow I'd made myself, brass-tipped arrows, fishlines with a couple of real steel hooks. Maybe I'd really do it, I thought. Maybe today.

I shinnied over the stockade without trouble and started up the mountain. I was being pulled two ways then. The Emmia who talked in my heart wasn't whimpering over bones. I was thinking about the real soft-lipped girl who'd

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

probably want me to turn back, stick it out through my bond-period, get civilized, make something of myself. Who might not mind, might even like it, if I told her or showed her what I felt about her instead of just mooning at her through doorways like a stunned calf. The forest pulled the other way.

Climbing the steep ground from the city in the morning hush, I decided I'd merely stay lost a day or two as I'd done before. Other times it had usually been my proper monthly day off, not always. I'd risked trouble before and talked my way out of it. I'd stay this time, say until the bacon was gone, and spend that time polishing the fresh whopmagullion I'd have to tell, to celebrate my return and soften the action of Old Jon's leather strap on my rump. The decision itself perked me up. When I was well under cover of the woods and the time was right, I climbed a maple to watch the sunrise.

It was already beyond first-light, the fire not yet over the rim. I'd missed the earliest bird-calls, now their voices were rippling back and forth across the world. I heard a white-throat sparrow in a bush; robin and wood-thrush, loveliest of all bird singers, were busy everywhere. A cardinal flew by me, a streak of flame, and a pair of smoky-white parrots broke out of a sycamore to skim over the tree-tops. In a sweet-gum nearby I caught sight of a pair of white-face monkeys who didn't mind me at all. When I looked away from them I saw the golden blaze begin.

For the first time that I can remember, I wanted to know, Where does it come from, the sun? What happens over there when it's set afire every morning? Why should God go to all that trouble to keep us warm?

Understand, at that time I had no learning at all. I'd scarcely heard of books except to know they were forbidden to all but the priests because they'd had something to do with the Sin of Man. I figured Old Jon was the smartest man in the world because he could keep accounts with the bead-board that hung in the taproom. I believed, as the Amran Church teaches everyone to believe, that the earth is a body of land three thousand miles square, once a garden and perfect, with God and the angels walking freely among men, until the time almost four hundred years ago when men sinned and spoiled everything; so now we're working out the penance until Abraham the Spokesman of God, who died on the Wheel at Nuber in the year 37, returns to judge His people, saving the few elect and sending the rest to fry forever in the caverns of Hell. And on all sides of that lump of land spread the everlast-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

ing seas all the way to the rim of the world. The Book of Abraham, said the teacher-priests, doesn't tell how far away the rim is, because that's one of the things God does not wish men to know.

Doubts I did have. I thought it remarkable how the lightning never did arrive no matter how I sinned, even on Fridays. The doubts were small; young grass trying to work up through the brown old trash of winter.

I understood of course—all children far younger than fourteen understood it—that while you might get away with a lot of sinning on the sly, you agreed out loud with whatever the Church taught or else you didn't stay alive. I saw my first heretic-burning when I was nine, after I'd gone to work at the Bull-and-Iron. In Moha they were always conducted along with the Spring Festival. Children under nine weren't required to attend.

I watched the dawn from my maple, the birth and growing of the light. Surely I was not watching what happened in my mind, for the thought was living in me, and I not knowing how it could have come; the thought, What if someone traveled all the way to watch the firing of the sun?

Nowadays I understand that thoughts do not come to you. You make them, they grow in you until the time arrives when you must recognize them.

Down out of my maple then, up the long rise of the mountain in deep forest, where the heat of the day is always mild. I walked and climbed slowly, not wishing to raise a sweat, for the smell of it can drift a surprising distance, and black wolf and brown tiger may get interested. Against black wolf I had my knife. He dislikes steel. Brown tiger cares nothing for knives—a flip of his paw is sufficient—though he's said to respect arrows, thrown spears and fire, usually. I've heard tell of brown tiger leaping a fire-circle to make a meal of hunters. It could be true, for his hunger must be immense and compelling in a bad season when moose and deer and bison have gone scarce. I was not thinking much about those ancient enemies when I climbed North Mountain that morning. The question-thought was in me, saying, What if *I* were to go beyond the rim, where the sun is set afire? . . .

My cave was a crack in a cliff, broadening inside to a room four feet wide, twenty deep. The cleft ran up into darkness, and must have broken through to the outside, for a small draft like the pull of a chimney kept the air fresh. Sometimes I wished the entrance was narrower—black wolf could have got in, maybe even tiger. I'd cleared out a few copperheads when I first found the cave, and had to be watchful against them

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

too, or rattlers, slithering back to reclaim it. The approach was a ledge that widened in front of the cave, with enough earth to support a patch of grass, and the cave was located well around the east shoulder of the mountain, so that the city was shut away. I could safely build a fire at night behind the rocks at the cave entrance, and I always did. You need a sleep-fire for safety, and the knack of waking at the right moments to refresh it. I'd long ago lifted a flint-and-steel from the Bull-and-Iron kitchen where it didn't seem real decorative. I usually doused my fire before dawn. No sense painting smoke on bright sky to stir up the curious.

That morning I first made sure about my bow and arrows and fishing gear. They hadn't been disturbed. And yet I felt a strangeness. Not snakes and not intruders. Some eastern sunlight was entering; I could see as well as I needed to for safety, but something nagged me. I stood a long time moving only my eyes. I moistened my nose, but caught no wrong scent.

When I found the trouble at last, far at the back on one of the cave walls where sunlight didn't reach, and where my glance must have touched it unknowingly while I was looking at my gear, I was no wiser. It was simply a small drawing made by the point of some softer, reddish rock. I goggled at it, trying to imagine it had been there always. No such thing. That cave was mine, the only place on earth I'd ever felt I owned, and I knew it like the skin of my body. This had been done since my last visit, in December before winter set in.

Two stick-figures, circles for heads with no faces, single lines for legs and arms and bodies, both with male parts indicated. I'd heard of hunters' sign-messages. But what did this say that a hunter could want to know? The figures held nothing, did nothing, just stood there.

The one on my right was in human proportion, with slightly bent elbows and knees in the right places, all his fingers and toes. The other stood to the same height, but his legs were far too short without a knee-crook, and his arms too long, dangling below his crotch. He had only three toes for each foot, a big one and two squeezed-up little ones. His fingers were blunt stubs, though the artist had gone to a lot of trouble drawing good human fingers for the other jo.

No tracks in the cave or on the ledge. Nothing left behind.

I gave it up—nothing else to do. Somebody'd been here since December, and he was honest because he never touched my gear, and likely meant me no harm. Last year I'd brought a horse-shoe and slipped it into the jumble of

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

rocks before the cave. Now I made certain it was still in place—it was; anyway I'd never heard of a trick like this being pulled by witches or spooks.

I worked a while, gathering fresh balsam to sleep on, and a supply of firewood against the night. Then I shrugged off shirt and loin-rag—but not my knife, naturally—and lay out naked in the sunny grass, drowsing, daydreaming, not wondering much now about my visitor because I supposed he was long gone. I let other thoughts range wide, into the open sky and beyond the limits of the day.

I thought of journeying.

A patch of land three thousand miles square, and the everlasting seas. Hudson Sea, Moha Water, the Lorenta Sea, even the great Ontara Sea in the northwest—all those, said the teacher-priests, are mere branches of the great sea, dividing the known world into islands. From travelers' talk—oh, I think all the best of my education up to fourteen came from evenings at the Bull-and-Iron when I was minding the fireplace in the taproom or lending a hand serving drinks with my ears flapping—I knew that in some places the Hudson Sea is only a few miles wide; small craft cross it readily in good weather. And I knew that some thirty-ton ships of Levannon sail coastwise through Moha Water to the Lorenta Sea, then south for trade with Nuin—Old City and Land's End, the easternmost part of the known world, except for a few of the outlying Cod Islands. Long, dangerous, roundabout, that northern passage, especially bad in the Lorenta Sea, where winds can be hellish or at other times fog may lie thick for days, hiding both shores—and as for the shores, wilderness on both sides, red bear and brown tiger country not meant for man. Yet that route was safer, travelers said, than the southern course down the Hudson Sea and along the Conicut coast, for at the end of that course the Cod Islands pirates with their devilish little scoon-rigged fighter craft were somehow able to smell out every third vessel worth the taking, and they couldn't be bothered with prisoners unless there were women aboard.

I thought, If thirty-tonners of Levannon make that northern passage for the sake of trade, why can't they sail farther, much farther? What's stopping them? Sure, I was ignorant. I'd never seen even the Hudson Sea, and couldn't picture it. Likely I'd never heard the word "navigation" at that time. I had no notion of the terror and the vastness of open sea when the land's gone and there's no mark to steer by unless someone aboard knows the mystery of guessing position from the pattern of the stars. But an ignorant boy

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

can think. And I thought, If nobody dares sail beyond sight of land, and if the Book of Abraham doesn't say, how can anyone, even the priests, claim to *know* what's out there? Can't there be other lands before you come to the rim?

I thought, How do they even know there is a rim? If it goes on forever—

And I thought, If I were to sail east toward the place of sunrise—

Nay, but suppose I traveled at least to Levannon, where a young man might sign aboard one of those thirty-tonners. Suppose I started this morning . . .

I thought of Emmia.

I'd glimpsed her once at her window, birth-naked for bedtime, prettier than any flower. That was the year before. I'd sneaked out of my loft sore and angry from a licking Old Jon gave me—a mule got loose in the vegetable patch, not my fault but he wouldn't hear of it. That night I swore I'd run away and the hell with all of them. But from the street my eye caught the glow of candle-light at a window at the side of the inn on the second floor, that I knew was Emmia's. A thick-stemmed jinny-creeper vine ran up that side of the building, spreading leaf-patterns over many of the windows, and hers was one, and behind the ghostly dark patches of the pointed leaves her sweet body was moving. I saw her let free red-brown hair to tumble over her shoulders, and she combed it, watching herself no doubt in a mirror I couldn't see. Then she must have suddenly noticed the curtain was still open, for she came to close it. Not in any hurry. She couldn't have seen me, my skinny carcass squinched into the shadow of the next building. She stood gazing out into the dark a short while, long enough to bewitch me as if I'd never seen her before, the slow grace of her motion, her round lifted arm, deep-curved waist and the warm triangle and the division between her big breasts a line of tender darkness.

Naked women weren't news to me, though I'd never had one. Skoar had peep-shows like any civilized city, including penny-a-look ones that I could afford. But this was Emmia, whom I saw every day in her smock or slack-pants, busy at a hundred tasks around the inn and scolded by her ma for laziness half the time, candle-making, mending, dusting, overseeing the slave help when Mam Robson was sick, waiting on table, coming out to the barn and stable sometimes to help me collect hens' eggs, even lend a hand feeding the critters and milking the goats. This was Emmia, and like sudden music I loved her.

I couldn't run away then, nor think of it. She drew the curtain, her candle died, I stole back to my loft forgetting Old Jon's beating and all my wrath. I fell sleep

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

that night imagining the pressure and savor of her beside me on my pallet in the hay—well, and part of the time I had myself inheriting the inn and Old Jon's fortune, and Old Jon's dying speech with a blessing on the marriage would have made a skunk weep and forgive all his enemies. Though many times later I risked going out to stare at that window after dark, it never happened again. But the image lived in me, was with me on my ledge before the cave as morning glided toward noon.

My ears must have caught the knowledge first, then my right hand firming on my knife while my mind was still beclouded by love and fancy. Then everything in me said, Look out! Wake up! I opened my eyes and turned my head slowly enough like a creature rousing in the natural way.

My visitor was there, a short way up the ledge, and he smiled.

Anyway I think he smiled, or wanted to. His mouth was a poor gash no longer than the mid-joint of my forefinger, in a broad flat hairless face. Monstrously dirty he was, and fat, with a heavy swaying paunch. Seeing his huge long arms and little stub legs, I thought I knew who he was.

He did have knees but they scarcely showed, for his lower legs were as big around as his thighs, blocky columns with fat-rolls drooping from the thigh-sections. Baldheaded as a pink snake, hairless to the middle, but there at his navel a great thatch of twisty black hair began and ran all the way down his legs to his stubby three-toed feet. He wore nothing at all, poor jo, and it didn't matter. So thick was that frowsy hair I had to look twice before I was sure he was male. He had no ears, just small openings where they should have been. And he had no nose—none at all, you understand? Simply a pair of slits below the little sorrowful black eyes that were meeting my stare bravely enough. He said: "I go away?"

I'd been about to draw my knife and shriek at him to go away. I didn't. I tried to move slowly, getting on my feet. Whatever my face was doing, it made him no more frightened than he was already.

In spite of those legs he stood tall as I, maybe five feet five. He was grief and loneliness standing in the sun, ugly as unwanted death.

A mue.

In Moha, and all countries I've since known, the law of church and state says flat and plain: *A mue born of woman or beast shall not live.*

Well, law is what men make it, and you heard tales. A woman with a devil's aid might bribe a priest to help conceal a muebirth, hoping (always a vain hope according to the tales) that the

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

mue might outgrow its evil and appear human instead of devil-begotten. I think, by the way, that Nuin and Katskil are the only countries which require that the mother of a mue must be killed. In Moha, I know, the law explains that a demon bent on planting mue-seed is well known to enter women in their sleep and without their knowledge, therefore they aren't to blame unless witnesses can prove the contrary, that they performed the act with the demon awake and knowingly. At the bull-and-Iron I'd heard plenty of such tales about mues born in secret—single-eyed, tailed, purple-skinned, monkey-sized, four-armed, or anything else the story-teller cared to imagine I guess—growing up in secret and finally taking to the wilderness. Where it was the duty of any decent citizen to kill them on sight—a dangerous undertaking even if they seemed defenseless, for the stories claimed that the demon who fathered the mue was likely enough to be watching over his offspring, perhaps in the shape of an animal, a snake or wolf or tiger.

He said again: "I go away?"

His voice was deep, slow, blurred, hard to understand. He didn't move except for an idle swinging of his arms. Sprouting huge out of his soggy body—why, those arms could have torn a bull in quarters.

"No, don't go."

"Man," he said. "Boy-man. Beautiful."

I'm not, of course. I'm puggy-nosed, freckled, knotty-muscled, small but limber. It didn't occur to me at first that he meant me, but he was studying me sharply with those sad little pouched eyes, as I stood there with nothing on but my knife-belt, and there was nothing else he could have meant. I suppose I understand now that anything in the natural human shape would have looked beautiful to him. I knew he could see the bumpy racing of my heart; glancing down, I could see it myself, a crazy bird's-wing flutter below the flare of my bottom ribs. Out of the uproar in my head I could find nothing to say except: "Thanks for the picture. I like it." I saw he didn't know the word "picture". "Lines," I said, and pointed to the cave. "Good."

He understood then; smiled and chuckled and gobbled. "You come me," he said. "I show you good things, I."

Go with him? Father Abraham, no! And maybe meet his father? I should—but I couldn't think. I pulled on my shirt and loin-rag, trying to watch not only the mue but the ledge behind him, and the region behind my back too. I said: "W-w-wait!" and I stepped into my cave.

Out of his sight, I was taken with a fit of trembling, sick and silly. Then I had my knife out and

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

was hacking away a good half of that loaf of oat bread. I know I had some notion of buying him off. I recall thinking that if his father was in wolf-shape, maybe the bacon would do some good. But I didn't take it; I set it, and the rest of the loaf, back on the rock ledge with my bow and arrows, and my fingers were reaching for the luck-charm at my neck. It wasn't there. I remembered I'd dropped it in my sack because the string had broken the day before and I couldn't find another. Now I slid the sack over my shoulder, and took some comfort from feeling the charm, the little male-female god-thing, lumpy through the cloth of the sack.

A clay trifle. I've learned since then that they carve such trash down in Penn, to sell to travelers for souvenirs, and likely it came from there. It was given me by my mother, or by somebody in the house where I was born, for I'm told it was on a string around my neck when I was taken to the orphanage, and there they laughed at it some but let me keep it. Emmia was often curious about it—such things aren't common in Moha. Once, when we were looking for hens' eggs in the barn loft, she caught hold of it and asked me, a bit red-faced and whispery, if I knew what it meant. I was thirteen; it was before I'd seen her in her window. I knew and didn't know what *she* meant, was scared of the difference in her face and of the queer sweet-smelling warmth that reached me from her nearness, and so nothing came of what might have been a lively hour if my thoughts had grown a little closer toward those of a man. Oh, I don't believe in luck-charms nowadays. Luck, good or bad, simply happens; you can't make it, or push it around with charms and words and all that jibberty-mumble. But in those days I more than half believed in it. And since I did, it helped to stop my trembling, as I carried out that half-loaf to—him. Carried it out, knowing with not a trace of doubt what I ought to do, meant to do, what the law said I must do.

He didn't reach for it. Those nostril-slits flared, though, and his gaze followed my fingers like a dog's when I broke off a small piece of the bread and ate it myself. I held out the rest to him and he accepted it, carried it to his pitiful mouth. I got a glimpse of his teeth, brownish, small, close-set, weak-looking. He gnawed awkwardly. His eyes never left me as he munched, and snuffled, and slobbered. He kept grunting "Good, good!" and trying to smile with his mouth full. Merciful winds, it was nothing but common oat bread! And with all that fat, he couldn't have been going hungry.

At fourteen I couldn't understand that it wasn't bread he was

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

starved for. I know it now.

The bread gone, he gave his wet mouth a swipe and said: "You come me now? Good things. Show good things, I." He walked a few steps up the ledge, looking back. Like a dog.

Yes, I followed him.

He walked better than I expected. His knees could bend only a few inches, but the stub legs were powerful to hold up all that weight, and they could pump along at surprising speed. On the level, it was a stiff-legged waddle. But on the steep ground, as we climbed around toward the northern side of the mountain, his arms would swing forward touching the earth, a four-legged scramble that carried him up the rises about as fast as I cared to walk. And he was quiet, in the same way I'd learned to go quiet in the woods. He knew this country, got his living out of it, must have known it a good while. I couldn't guess his age, however, and hardly tried to.

North Mountain mue, I've got no other name for him. He would never have owned one. What the hell, like other orphanage kids I never had a last name myself, and don't miss it. I'm just Davy.

Don't think my kindness—if it was kindness, that business with the bread—came from anything good in me. It didn't. It came partly from fear, partly from an ugly sort of planning. From the year of teaching by the priests that every child in Moha is required to sweat out before he's twelve, and from the Bull-and-Iron tales, I knew that mues weren't in the same class with demons or ghosts or elves, but solid flesh in spite of being the get of devils. They couldn't vanish or float through walls; they didn't have the evil eye. If you got near one you'd see and smell him, he couldn't use spells or witch-signs (though his father might) because God wouldn't allow that to a miserable mue, and he would die for good when you put a knife in him. The law said when, not if. I said you must if you could; if you couldn't, you must notify the Church at once, so that he can be hunted down by men properly equipped and with the protection of a priest.

I walked on behind him, up through the deeper forest on the north side of the mountain, and more and more I hated and resented him, cursing the luck that made me the one to find him, imagining his demon father behind every tree, and sickened the way anyone might be sickened by ugliness, terror, strangeness and a foul smell.

We reached a level area, a flanking ridge of the mountain's north side where the trees stood great and old, spaced well apart but casting thick shade from interlacing branches. Most of them were pines, that through the years

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

had built a heavy carpet; here anyone could walk soft as a breeze. My ears, and they are keen, could barely hear the mue a few steps ahead of me as his blob-by feet pressed the pine needles. I myself moved more quietly than that. I felt that he didn't like it here. He could shamble along faster on sloping ground. In this place anything could overtake him. He padded on at his best poor speed, with constant glances to left and right—truly like someone who knew nothing more about the shadows than I did.

The stories didn't say there was *always* a demon attending a mue.

It would be easiest, and I knew it, here on the level. Six inches of double-edge Katskil steel, honed to the limit as mine always was, will go through anything made of flesh. I was watching the best spot, below his last rib on the left side. If a no-way human thing, or being, was observing us, he or it might read my thought. It might not be in animal shape at all. But as for the mue—well, if I failed to kill at the first stab, at least I'd have time to dodge his frightful arms, and run faster than he could hope to do, while the blood drained out of him. Mue blood. Devil-fathered blood.

I slid my knife free. I lowered it quickly out of sight inside the mouth of my sack, afraid he might turn suddenly before I was ready, afraid of other eyes. I lessened the distance between us, calculating angles, arm-length, the lie of the ground. It would be best if I stooped slightly and drove my knife upward.

He coughed slightly, a little throat-clearing, a completely human sound. It hurt me somehow, angered me too, for surely he had no right to do things in the human way. Anyhow there was no hurry; plenty more of this partly open area where it would be safest to do it. I saw no change in the tree-pattern up ahead. I told myself to wait till I felt more ready. I told myself how easy it would be. Just wait a minute . . .

I saw myself back at the Bull-and-Iron telling my true-tale. I wouldn't brag, nay, I'd speak with a noble calm. I could afford it. I'd be the Yard-Boy Who Killed A Mue.

They would send out a mission, priests, hunters and soldiers, to find the body and verify my story. I'd go along, and they'd find it. A skeleton, with those awful leg-bones, would be enough—and that's all it would be, for in the time it took the mission to argue and get going, the carrion-ants would finish what other scavengers began, the old necessary wilderness housecleaning. The skeleton would do. They'd set out doubting me, snickering behind their hands. Then the laughers would look sick, and I'd be a hero.

It came to me that this was no

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

gaudy daydream of the kind that had filled my head with rosy mists at other times. This was what would happen in sober fact. I'd be questioned and examined afterward by the priests, maybe the Bishop of Skoar, the Mayor, even the Colonel of the army garrison. Why, possibly the Kurin family, absolute tops in the Skoar aristocracy, would hear of me and want to learn more. If they liked me, I'd be a bond-servant no longer. With them for my patrons I'd be the same as rich.

I would go to Levannon, on a roan horse. Two attendants—no, three, one to ride ahead and make sure of a room for me at the next inn, never mind who had to be tossed out; and a maid-servant to bathe me and keep the bed warm. In Levannon I would *buy* me a ship, a thirty-tonner. And wouldn't I wear a green hat with a hawk's feather, a red shirt of Penn silk, my loin-cloth silken too, none of your damned scratchy linsey rags, maybe white with small golden stars and crosses! Real leather moccasins with ornaments of brass.

I saw Old Jon Robson ashamed of past unkindness but quick to get in on the glory. I'd let him. It would suit my dignity. Clickety-yak, he knew all along the boy had wonderful stuff in him, only needed an opportunity to bring it out, what he'd always said, clickety clickety, and me looking calm, friendly, a little bit bored. Poor Old Jon!

And Emmia: "Davy, weren't you *terrified?* O Davy darling, what if *he'd* killed *you?*" Maybe not just "darling"; maybe she'd call me "Spice", which girls didn't say in my native city unless they meant come-take-it. "Davy, Spice, what if I'd lost you?" "Nay, Emmia, it wasn't anything. I had to do it." So, since she'd called me that, it wasn't the taproom where she spoke, but her bedroom, and she'd let down her lovely hair to cover the front of her in make-believe modesty, but I put my hands below her chin—you know, gentle, nevertheless the hands that had killed a mue—parting that flowing softness to let the pink flower-tips peep through . . .

The mue halted and turned to me. "Bad place," he said, pointing at some of the enormous trees, to remind me how anything might lurk behind them. "No fear, boy-man. Bad thing come, I help, I." He tapped the bulges of his right arm. "Fight big, you, I. You, I—word? —fra—fre—"

"Friends," I said, or my voice said it for me.

"Friends." He nodded, satisfied, turned his broad back to me and went on.

I pushed my knife into its sheath and did not draw it again that day.

The big-tree region ended. For

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

a while our course slanted downhill through smaller growth; now and then a gap in the tree-cover let me glance out across rolling land to the north and east. Then we came to a place where the master growth was no longer trees but the wild grape. Monstrous vines looped and clung in their slow violence throughout a stand of maple and oak, the trees twisted into tortured attitudes by the ceaseless pressure. Many of the trees were dead but still provided firm columns to uphold their murderers. In the upper shadows I saw flashes of brilliance, not birds but the flowers called orchids whose roots grow on the branches never touching earth. Moss hung there too, a gray-green strangeness; I had never seen more than a little of it on the Skoar side of the mountain, but here it grew dense, making me think of dusty curtains swaying to a breeze I could not feel.

In this man-forgotten place, the mue stopped, glanced up into the vine-bound branches and studied my legs and arms, bothered. "You can't," he said, and showed me what he meant by catching a loop of vine and swarming up hand over hand till in a moment he was thirty feet above ground. There he swung, and launched his great bulk across a gap, catching another loop, and another. A hundred feet away, he shifted his arms so quickly I could not follow the motion, and came swinging back above me. Now I'm clever in the trees, but my arms are merely human, not that good. He called down softly: "You go ground? Not far. Bad thing come, I help quick."

So I went ground. It was nasty walking—thicket, ground-vines, fallen branches, dead logs where fire-ants would be living. The fat black-and-gold orb spiders liked this place and had their dainty-looking homes everywhere; their bite can't kill, but will make you wish it would. I had to think of snake and scorpion too, and listen for any noise in the brush that wasn't my own. I struggled through maybe a quarter-mile of that stuff, knowing the mue was near me but often unable to see or hear him, before I came up against a network of cat-brier, and there I was stopped.

Ten-foot elastic stems, tougher than moose-tendon and barbed every inch, growing so close they'd built a sort of basket-weave. Brown tiger himself, with his shoe-leather hide and three inches of fur, would never try it. Then beyond that barricade I saw what could have been the tallest tree in Moha.

A tulip-tree twelve feet through at the base and I'm not lying. The wild grape had found it long ago and gone rioting up into the sunshine, but might not kill the giant for another hundred years. My mue was up there, calling, point-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

ing out a place on my side where a stem of the vine thick as my wrist grew up straight for thirty feet and connected with the strands around the tulip-tree. Well, that I could manage. I shinnied up, and worked over to the great tree along a dizzy-sagging horizontal vine. The mue grasped my foot and set it gently on a solid branch.

As soon as he was sure of my safety he began climbing, and I followed—I don't know how far up, call it sixty feet more. It was easy enough, like a ladder. The side-branches had become smaller, the vine-leaves thicker in the increase of sunshine, when we reached an obstruction of crossed sticks and interwoven vine. No eagle's nest as I foolishly thought at first—no bird ever moved sticks of that size.

The mue walked out on the branch below this structure and hoisted himself to the next limb. Up beside him, I could understand it. A nest, yes, five feet across, built on a double crotch, woven as shrewdly as any willow basket I ever saw in the Corn Market, and thickly lined with gray moss. He let himself down into his home and his sad mouth grinned. I grinned back—I couldn't help it—and followed, with more caution than I needed, for the thing was solid as a house. It *was* a house.

He talked to me.

I felt no sense of dreaming, as people sometimes say they do in a time of strangeness. But didn't you, in childhood, play the game of imaginary countries? Promise yourself, say, that if you passed through the gap of a forked tree-trunk you'd be in a different world? Then if you did in the flesh step through such a tree, you learned that you must still rely on make-believe, didn't you? And that hurt, some. It cut a few of the threads of your fancy. But suppose that after passing through your tree-fork, you had been met in solid truth by—oh, a gnome, dragon, fairy-tale princess . . . It wasn't quite like that. I was fourteen, almost a man. But time moved curiously for me there in the mue's nest, and all the inner life of me—thought, vision, ignorance, wonder—was the life of someone who had not existed before that day. I think we never do know yesterday any better than we know tomorrow.

He was fingering my shirt. "Cloth?" he said, and I nodded. "Is beautiful." A rarely dirty old shirt, I'd patched it myself a dozen times. But he liked that word "beautiful" and to him I suppose it meant many things it wouldn't to you or me. "See you before," he told me. "Times ago."

He must have meant he'd watched me secretly on my other visits to North Mountain, from high in a tree or rock-still in a

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

thicket. To guess it would have scared me gutless; learning of it now I only felt silly, me with my sharp eyes and ears and nose—studied all this time and never a hint of it.

Then he was telling me about his life. I won't try to record much of his actual talk, the jumbled half-swallowed words, pauses when he could find no word at all. Some of it I couldn't understand, gaps that caught no light from my few clumsy questions.

He was born somewhere in the northeast. He waved that way; from our height, it was all a green sea under sunshine. He said "ten sleeps", but I don't know what distance he could have covered in a day at the time he left his birthplace. His mother, evidently a farm woman, had born him secretly in a cave in the woods. "Mother's man die before that"—I think he was speaking of his father, or should I say the man who would have been his father if he had not been devil-begotten?

Describing his mother, all he could say was "Big, good." I could piece it out from Bull-and-Iron tales. She must have been some strapping stout woman who'd been able to hide her pregnancy in the early months. The law says every pregnancy must be reported to the authorities at once, no pregnant woman may ever be left alone after the fifth month, and a priest must always be present at the birth to do what's necessary if the birth should be a mue. She evaded that somehow—maybe the death of her husband made it simpler—and bore him and nursed him in secret, raised him to some age between eight and ten with no help except that of a great dog.

The dog was probably one of the tall gray wolfhounds that farm families need if they live outside the village stockade. The bitch guarded the baby constantly while his mother could not be with him, and grew old while he grew up, his closest companion, nurse, friend.

His mother taught him speech, what he had of it, weakened now by years of disuse. Above all, she taught him that he was different, that he must live always in the woods and forever avoid human beings because they would kill him if they found him. She taught him to get a living from the wilderness, hunting, snaring, learning the edible plants and avoiding the poisonous; how to stalk; more important, how to hide. Then, some time between his eighth and tenth year as I understood it—"she come no more."

He waited a long while. The dog stayed with him of course, hunted with him and for him, never let him out of her sight until—grown old no doubt but unchanging in devotion because the gray wolfhounds are like that—she was killed fighting off a wild boar.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

After that he knew or felt that his mother must have died too, and he had to go away. He couldn't explain the need—"I must go, I." So he made his journey of ten sleeps. I tried to ask him about years. He knew the word dimly, but had never thought of counting the times when the world cooled into the winter rains. Looking back, guessing, I believe he wasn't much more than twenty-five.

During the journey of ten sleeps a hunter had sighted him, shot an arrow into his back, loosed a dog at him. "I must kill the dog, I." He lifted his stub hands with the fingers curling tightly inward to show me how it had been done. A harsh lesson, and it hurt him to remember it, that proof of his mother's teaching, that dogs can sometimes be almost as dangerous as men. "Then man come for me with sharp-end stick, man beautiful." That word again. And again his hands came up, the fingers squeezing life out of a remembered throat. After which he trembled and covered his face, but was watching me I think through a slit between those same curious fingers.

I said: "I would not kill you."

When his hands fell I thought he looked puzzled, as though he had known that all along, no cause for me to say it.

"I show you good thing." He was solemn, lifting himself from the nest and climbing down the tree, this time all the way to the ground. Here a floor of smallish rocks made a circle spreading five or six feet from the base of the tree to the edge of the complete catbrier barrier, a little fortress. The rocks were all about a foot in diameter, most of them with a flattened part, overlapping so that the brier had no chance to force its way through them. Nature never built a rock-pile like that; I knew who had—and what a labor, searching out the size and kind he wanted, hundreds of them, transporting them up and down his grapevine path!

He was watching me more intently, maybe not so trustingly. He said: "Wait here." He stumped off to the other side of the great tree, and I heard the noise of rocks being carefully moved. His body stayed out of sight, but his hands appeared beyond the trunk at my left and set down a slab of stone the size of my head—dull reddish, and I noticed the glint of an embedded quartz pebble. Not then with any ugly intent, just thinking ahead of his poor limited mind the way anyone might, I guessed that would be the marker-stone of some hidey-hole. A moment later he returned to me, carrying a thing whose like I have never seen elsewhere in the world.

Not even in Old City of Nuin, where I later lived a while, and learned writing and reading, and

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

more about Old Time than it's safe for a man to know.

I thought when I first saw the golden shining of it in his dirty hands that it must be a horn such as hunters and cavalry soldiers use, or one of the screechy brass things—cornets they're called—that I'd heard a few times when Rambler gangs passed through Skoar and gave us their gaudy entertainments in the town green. But this was none of those poor noise-makers.

The large flared end a foot across, the two round coils and straight sections of the pipe between bell and mouthpiece, the three movable pegs (I call them pegs though it doesn't quite rightly describe them) built with impossible smoothness and perfection into the pipe—all these things, and the heavy firmness of the metal, the unbelievable soft gleaming of it, made this a marvel that no one of our world could build.

Ancient coins, knives, spoons, kitchenware that won't rust—such objects of Old-Time magic metal are upturned in plowing now and then, even today. I knew about them. If the thing is simple and has an obvious use, the rule in Moha is finders keepers, if the finder can pay the priest for his trouble in exorcising the bad influence. Mam Robson had a treasure like that, a skillet-thing four inches deep, of shiny gray metal light and very hard that never took a spot of rust. It had been found in plowing by her grandfather, and handed down to her when she married Old Jon. She never used it, but liked to bring it from her bedroom now and then to show the guests, and tell how her mother did use it for cooking and took no harm. Then Old Jon would crash in with the story of how it was found as if he'd been there, clickety-clickety, the Mam watching sidelong and her gloomy horse-face saying *he* wasn't a man who'd ever find her such a thing, not him, miracle if he ever got up off his ass except to scratch. Well, and if the Old-Time object is something for which no reasonable man can imagine a use—a good many are said to be like that—naturally the priest will keep it, and bury it where it can work no damage, men suppose.

Ignorant as I was, I knew before the mue let me take it in my hands that I was looking on a work of ancient days that might be not for any man to touch. It is not gold of course, but as I've said, a metal of Old Time that has no name in our day. I've seen true gold in Old City; its weight is much greater, the feel of it altogether different. But I still call this a golden horn, because I thought of it so for a long time, and now that I know better the name still seems to me somehow true.

"Mother's man's thing," the mue said, and at length passed it to me.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

He was not happy while, dazed and afraid and wondering, I turned it about in my hands. It gathered light from this shady place and made itself a sun. "She bring me. I little, I. I to keep. She said, I to keep, I." He started once or twice to take it back, the motion uncompleted, and I was too deep in bewilderment to let it go. Then he said: "You blow." So he knew at least that it was a thing for music.

I puffed my cheeks and blew, and nothing happened—a breath-noise and a mutter. The mue laughed, really laughed. Expecting it. He took it from me hastily. "Now I blow, I." His miserable mouth almost disappeared in the cup, and he did something with his cheeks, not puffing them at all but tightening them till his flat face altered with carven lines. And I heard it speak.

There is no other voice like that on earth. Have you seen an icicle breaking sunshine to a thousand jewels of colored light, and can you in a waking dream imagine that icicle entering your heart with no common pain but with a transfiguration so that the light lives within you, not to die until your own time of dying? You see, it is foolish—I have learned something of music since my childhood, even a great deal as such things are measured, but words will not give you what I know. I've heard the viols they make in Old City that are said to follow a design of Old Time. I've heard singers, a few of them with such voices as men imagine for angels. But there's no other voice like that of the golden horn. And the more I know of music, the less able am I to speak anything of it except in music's own language. Words! Can you talk of color to a man blind from birth? Could I know anything of the ocean until the day came when I stood on the beach and my own eyes saw the blue and gold, the white of foam, the green depth and the gray of distance, and I heard the sigh and thunder, the joy and the lamentation of wave on sand and wind on wave?

The one long note the mue first played—soft, loud, soft, low in pitch—shook me with unbelief. As you might be shaken if the curtain of stars and night were swept aside, and you saw—how should I know what you would see? He pressed one of the pegs, and blew another note. Another peg, another note. Two pegs at once, another. All pure, all clear and strong, changing, fading and swelling and dying out. A single note to each breath—he had no thought of combining them, no notion of melody; I think he never even moved one of the pegs while he blew. I understood presently, in spite of my own thick ignorance, that he, poor jo, had no knowledge at all of the thing he

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

held in his hands. How could he?

Mother's man's thing—had his father known more? A miracle of Old Time, found—where? Hidden away—how? Hidden away surely, I thought, for how could a man play this horn where others heard and not be known at once for a possessor of magic, brought before priests and princes to tell of it, and play it, and no doubt lose it to their itching hands? A miracle of Old Time, carried off to be a toy for a mue-child in the wilderness . . .

"She said, I to keep, I. Good?"

"Good. Yes, good."

He asked, not happily: "You blow now?"

"I daren't."

He seemed relieved by that. He chuckled, and padded away behind the tree hugging the horn. I stayed where I was, hot and cold within. I watched the slab of reddish rock till his hands reached out for it. I heard the chink as it was set in place, and I knew the golden horn had to be mine.

It had to be mine.

He came back smiling and rubbing his lips, no longer concerned about his treasure, while I could think of nothing else. But a mean sort of caution kept me from saying anything more about it. And there was meanness, calculation, in the friendliness I showed him from then on. Almost certain what I meant to do, pushed toward it (so I excused myself) as if by a force outside of me, I acted a part. I grinned, nodded, made noises like his, stared around me as though his dwelling-place were a wonder of the world, while inside me I could think of nothing except how to get at that rock-pile in his absence.

For one thing I will give myself a small trace of honor. I did not again plan to kill him. The power had burned out of that. The idea was there, yes—even painfully strong at moments when he trustingly turned his back or looked away from me, and I remembered how fast my hand was, how quickly I could run, and how I would be praised and honored, not punished, for destroying him. Maybe I understood, without reasoning it through, that I just don't have it in me to kill another being for any reason except hunger or self-defense—anyway I never have, and I've been tempted to it a few times in my travels since that day. Whatever the reason, I did reject the thought of killing him, not purely from cowardice, so for what it's worth, that's my scrap of virtue.

All the same I'm not going to enjoy writing the next page or two. I could lie about what happened—how would you know the difference? Anybody can lie about himself; we all do it every day, trying like sin to show the world an image with all the warts rubbed off. Writing this story for you,

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

some-way I don't want to lie. Merely writing it seems to make the warts your business, so I won't draw myself as a saint or a hero or a wise man. Better just remember, friends, that a lot of the time I've acted almost as bad as you do, and be damned to it.

We climbed up from the catbrier fortress into the tulip tree, and I got clever. I asked: "Where is water?"

He pointed off into the jungle. "You want drink? I show you, I."

"Wash too," I said, hoping to get him interested in a brand-new idea. You can see how clever it was —if he ever got serious about washing himself, he had a long project ahead of him. "Washing is good," I said, and touched my arms and face, which happened to be pretty clean. "Dirt comes off in water. Is good, good. Wash."

I think he'd known the word once, though obviously it wasn't one of his favorites. He worked on it, studying my crazy gestures, frowning and mumbling. Then he studied his own skin, what you could see of it through the crust, and all of a sudden the great idea got to him. "Wash!" he said, and chuckled till he drooled, and wiped that away among the other smears. "Wash! I wash *all* me, be like you!"

Well . . . I did have the decency to feel sick. I'm sure he imagined, for a while at least, that I knew how to work some magic with water which would take away his ugliness and make him man-beautiful. I'd never intended that, and now I didn't see how to change the idea or explain it.

And he couldn't wait. He practically pushed me along the grapevine route, down outside the catbriers and off through the woods. This time he stayed with me on the ground instead of swinging ahead above me. I think he wanted to keep close, so that he could go on reminding me with grins and mumbles about our wonderful project.

We walked mostly downhill as I'd expected, and it was bad going until he turned off to follow a deer-trail out of the wild-grape area and into a clearer space, which suited me fine. I wanted distance from his home, lots of it. The trees had become well spaced, no more vines overhead, the ground reasonably clear. In country like this I could run like a bird before the wind. Not too soon, we reached the brook he had in mind, and traveled a comfortable distance further before arriving at a pool big enough for bathing, a quiet and lovely place of filtered sunlight and the muttering of cool water. We both studied the tracks of animals who had come to drink here, and found no record of danger, only deer, fox, wildcat, porcupine, whiteface monkey. I dropped my clothes on the bank and slipped into the water, slow and

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

noiseless the way I like to go, while he watched me, scared and doubtful, not quite believing anyone could really do a thing like that.

I beckoned to him with grins and simple words, made a show of scrubbing myself to show him how it was done. At last he ventured in, the big baby, an inch at a time. The pool was narrow but long, nowhere deeper than three feet. I'm glad to remember I didn't try to persuade him to try swimming —with his poor legs he'd probably have drowned. But I showed him he could walk or stand in the water and still have his head well above it. Gradually he caught on, found himself all the way in and began to love it.

I frolicked around, burning and impatient inside, my head full of just one thing. When I was sure he was really enjoying himself and wanted to go on with the great washing thing, I let him see me look suddenly and anxiously toward the afternoon sun. He understood I was thinking about time and the approach of evening. I said: "I must go back. You stay here, finish wash. I must go fast. You stay."

He understood but didn't like it. When I'd nipped out on the bank he started to follow, very slow, clumsy, timid in the water. "No," I said—"you finish wash." I pointed to the plentiful dirt still on him, made motions of sloshing water on my back. "All dirt bad. Washing good, good. You finish wash. I will come back."

"I finish wash, then I be—"

"Finish wash," I said, cutting that off—so I'll never know, and didn't want to know, whether he really imagined that washing would make him man-beautiful. "I must go now before sun go down."

"To smoke-place, big sticks?" He meant Skoar and its stockade.

"Yes." And I said again, as plain and friendly (and treacherous) as I could: "I will come back . . ."

I don't know if he watched me out of sight, for I couldn't look behind me. Presently I was running, as quickly and surely as I had ever done in my life, remembering all the landmarks without thinking of them. Up across the easy ground, that was hard for him, and into the grape-vine jungle, pulled accurately and fast as if I were bound to the golden horn by a tightening cord.

Up the grape-vine into the tulip-tree, and down inside the brier fortress, finding that red rock at once and lifting it aside. The horn lay there wrapped in gray-green moss that was like a cloth, and with hardly a glance to delay me I shoved it still wrapped into my sack, and was up over the grapevine, and out, and gone. If the mue had followed me at his best speed, and I'm sure he didn't follow at all, I would still have

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

been gone on my way before ever he came in sight of his home. Yes, I was very clever.

And now, in no danger from him at all, I was running faster than ever. Like a crazed hunted animal without sense or caution. Wolf or tiger could have taken me then with no trouble—but you need to be strangely alive in order to write words on paper; you notice I'm still living. I couldn't escape that driving need to run until I had gone all the way around the east side of the mountain, past the ledge that led to my cave, and had caught sight of the Skoar church-spires. Then I collapsed on a fallen log gulping for air.

The skin of my belly hurt horribly. I twitched my shirt aside and found red-burning skin and the puncture mark. Why, somewhere, during my mad running after I had stolen the horn, I must have blundered through an orb-spider's web, the thing had bitten me, and I hadn't even known it until now.

It wouldn't kill me. I'd had a bite from one of them before, on the arm. Needles were doing a jerking jig all over me, and my guts ached. I wouldn't sleep much, I knew. Tomorrow it would become an infernal itch for a while, and then stop hurting.

I wondered, as if someone had spoken aloud to stab me with the thought, whether I'd ever sleep well again.

I took out the horn with wobbling hands, unwrapping it from the moss. O the clear splendor, and the shining! Forest daylight flowed into it and was itself a silent music. And the horn was mine. Wasn't it?

I raised it to my lips, trembling but compelled. It amazed me—still does—how naturally the body of the horn rests against my body, and my right hand moves without guidance of thought over those three pegs. Did the faraway makers of the horn leave in it some Old-Time magic that even now tells the holder of the horn what he must do?—oh, foolishness; they simply remembered the shape and the needs of a human body, the way the maker of a simple knife-hilt will remember the natural shape of a human hand. But still, still—that kind of thinking and remembering, planning for necessity but also dreaming your way into the impossible until it changes and becomes true and real in your hand, isn't that a kind of magic? And so, many of us are magicians but have never noticed it; anyway I give you the thought if you'll have it.

I did not dare blow in to the horn; then I did so in spite of myself, not puffing or straining but breathing gently and, by accident I think, firming my lips and cheeks in what happened to be the right way. It spoke for me.

It was mine.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Only one note, and soft, so light was the breath I dared to use. But it was clear and perfect, the sunlight and the shining transformed to sound, and I knew then there was music hidden here that not the mue, maybe not anyone since the days of Old Time, had ever dreamed of until it came into my hands. And, sick and scared and miserable though I was, I knew it was for me to bring forth that music, or die.

Then I shook with common fright, for what if even that small sound of the horn could travel by some magic around the mountain where the true owner?—

But *I* was the true owner. It was mine.

I returned it to the sack and stumbled on down the mountain toward the city. The spider-bite was making me dizzy and slow, a bit feverish. Once I had to stop and heave, all blackness surging around me—any hunting beast could have had me for nothing. That cleared, and I went on. Near the edge of the forest, a hundred yards or so from the stockade, I holed up in a thicket, enough sense left in me to know I must wait for dark and the stockade guards' supper-time.

That was a bad hour. I crouched hugging the horn against my middle where the spider-bite jabbed me with fire-lances. I vomited again once or twice. I couldn't stand it to think of the mue, his friendliness, his human ways, for that would start me wondering what sort of thing *I* was.

There are tales of brain-mues. The most frightful kind of all, for they grow up in the natural human shape, and no one knows they are devil-begotten until, perhaps when they are full-grown, they go through a change that is called madness, behaving like wild beasts, or sometimes forgetting who or where they are, seeing and believing all manner of outrageous things until their infernal origin becomes known to everyone and they must be given over to the priests. What if I—

I could not examine nor tolerate the thought then. It stayed, at the fringes of my mind, a black wolf waiting.

Yes, a bad hour. Maybe it was also the hour when I started changing into a man.

The spider-bite was still a blazing misery under my shirt when it grew dark enough for me to move. All I remember about the agony of climbing the stockade is that when I reached the top of it I had to scrounge back out of sight and wait for a patrolling guard to walk on, and then waste my strength cussing his lights and gizzard when he met another guard and they spent ten minutes beating their gums. But that ended, I was into the city, the heavy burden in my sack unharmed, and I sneaked

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

along easily enough to the Bull-and-Iron, keeping close in the shadow of the buildings.

I saw a light in Emmia's window, though it wasn't late enough for her bedtime, and when I crept into the stable she was there, doing my work for me with a lantern. She'd just done watering the mule-team an hour late, and turned to me quick and sore with a finger at her lips. "They think I'm in my room. I swear this is the last time I cover up for you, Davy. What are we going to *do* about you? Don't you live here any more, Mister Independent?" I couldn't answer. It took all I had merely to look at her and try to appear human, while I squirmed my sack off and set it on the stable floor. I wished there was more shadow. It pulled my shirt open, and even in the dim lantern light she noticed the red patch on my belly. "Davy darling, what happened?" She dropped the water-bucket and hurried to me, with no more thought of scolding, or of anything except helping me. "What is it?"

"Orb-spider."

"Davy, *boy!* You silly jerk, the way you go wandering off where all those awful things are, I swear if you was only small enough to turn over my knee—" and she went on so, quite a while, the warm soft-mothery kind of scolding that doesn't mean a thing.

"I didn't goof off, Emmia, I thought it was my regular day off—"

"Oh, *shed* up, Davy, you didn't think never any such thing, why-'ve you got to lie to me? But I won't tell, I said I'd covered up for you, only more fool me if ever I do it again, and you're lucky it's Friday, you wasn't missed. Now look, you go straight up to your bed and I'll bring you a mint-leaf poultice for that nasty bite. The things you get into! Here, take my lantern up with you, I won't need it. Now you—"

"Kay," I said. There was that about Emmia—she was sweet as all summertime, but if you wanted to say anything to her, you had to work a mite fast to get it in. I tried to scoop up my sack without her noticing, but she could be sharp too sometimes, and I was clumsy with the lantern and all.

"Davy, merciful winds, whatever have you got *there?*"

"Nothing."

"Nothing! There you go again, and the thing as big as a house. Davy, if you've gone and taken something you shouldn't—"

"It's nothing!" I was yelling at her, and hurrying for the loft ladder. "If you got to know, it's some special wood I picked up, to carve something for—for your name-day, if you *got* to know."

"Davy! Little Spice!" So here she comes for me all in a warm rush. I swung the sack around behind me before a kiss landed—not on my

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

mouth, where I wanted it, because I ducked, but on my eyebrow anyhow, and anyhow a kiss. Well, "little Spice" doesn't mean the same or even half as much as just "Spice". Please forgive me, Davy, I'm *sorry!* Me scolding you, and all the time you're sick with that awful bite. Here!" I looked up, and she kissed me again, sudden-sweet, full on the mouth.

When my arms tightened around her she pulled away, staring at me deep, her eyes swimming in the lantern-light. She looked surprised, as if nothing like that had ever crossed her mind. "Why, Davy!" she said, dreamy-voiced. "Why, Davyboy . . ." But then she pulled her wits together. "Now then, straight up to bed with you, and I'll bring you that poultice soon as I can sneak the stuff and slip away with it. I'm not supposed to be here, you know."

I climbed to the loft, not too easily. I was thinking of other things she'd be bringing me, up that ladder. I couldn't make it seem real, yet my heart went to racing and thundering for other reasons than sickness from the bite and memory of what I'd done to a friend.

I hid the sack in the hay near my pallet, carelessly because dizziness and fever from the spider's poison had grown worse. Besides, I had a half-desire to show someone that horn and tell my story. Who but Emmia? Of all the South District boys I knew—few enough, for I never ran with the street gangs—there wasn't a one that I thought would understand or keep quiet about it. I could picture myself being called yellow for not killing the mue and wicked for not reporting it . . .

A chill shook me as I slipped off my loin-rag. I kept my shirt on as I crawled under my blanket, and there's a kind of blank stretch when my wits were truly wandering. I know I was trying to fold the blanket double for warmth and making a slithery mess of it when a second blanket was spread over me. Emmia had come back so softly that in sickness and confusion I hadn't seen or heard her. The blanket was wool-soft, full of the special girl-scent of her. From her own bed, and me a dirty yard-boy, and a thief. "Emmia—"

"Hush! You're a bit fevery, Davy. Be a good boy now and let me put on this poultice, ha?" Well, I wouldn't stop her, her hands gentle as moth-wings easing down the blankets, pressing the cloth with some cool minty stuff where my flesh was burning. "Davy, what was you raving about? Something about where the sun rises—but it's only evening." She brought the blanket back up to my chin, and pushed my arms under it, and I let her, like a baby. "You was talking about going

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

somewhere, and where the sun rises, and funny stuff. You're real light in the head, Davy. You better get to sleep."

I said: "What if a man could go where the sun rises, and see for himself?" Yes, maybe I was light in the head, but it was clearing. I knew where I was, and knew I wanted to tell her and ask her a thousand things. "You go to church better than I do, Emmia, I guess you never miss—is there anything says a man can't go looking, maybe for other lands, go out to sea, maybe a long long way?—" I believe I went on that way quite a while.

There was no harm in it. She blamed most of it on the fever, which I wasn't feeling any more, and the rest on a boy's wild-headedness. She sat by me with a hand resting light on the blanket over my chest, and now and then said little things like "You're all right, Davy-boy," and "It must be nice to travel a bit, I always wished I could . . ."

I felt better merely from the talk. When I quit, the fever from the bite was gone. Leaving the other fever, which I understood fairly well for fourteen, enough to realize that something was wrong with it.

I knew what men did with women. Any South District kid knows that. I knew it was what I wanted with Emmia. I knew she knew it, and wasn't angry. My trouble was fear, cold shadow-fear. Not of Emmia surely—who'd be afraid of Emmia, gentle as spring night, and her face in the dim glow of the lantern a little rose? "Are you warm enough now, Davy?"

"I'm warm. I wish—I wish—"

"What, Davy?"

"I wish you was always with me."

She moved quickly, startling me, and was lying beside me, the blankets between us, lying on my right arm so that it couldn't slide around her, and when my other arm tried to she caught my wrist and held it a while. But her lips were on my forehead and I could feel her breathing hard. "Davy, Spice, I oughtn't to do this, mustn't. Little Davy . . ." She let go my wrist. Our hands could wander then, and mine didn't dare. Hers did, straying over the blanket, resting here and there light and warm.

And nothing happened. I knew what ought to happen. It was almost as if someone in deepest shadow was muttering over and over: "I show you good things, I."

And I thought, What if she rolls over and bumps against that horn?—it's right behind her. And, What if Mam Robson, or Judd, or Old Jon—

She sat up brushing a wisp of hay out of her hair and looking angry, but not at me. "I'm sorry, Davy. I'm being foolish."

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"We didn't do anything, S-s—"

"What?"

"We didn't do anything, Spice."

"You mustn't call me that. It's my fault, Davy."

"We haven't done anything."

"I don't know what got into me."

"I wanted you to."

"I know, but . . . We must forget about it." Her voice was different, higher, too controlled, scared. "They'd all be after us."

"Let's run away, you and me."

"Now you're really talking wild." But at least she didn't laugh. No, she sat quiet three feet away from me, her smock tucked neat and careful over her knees, and talked to me a while, sweet and serious. About how I was a good, dear boy except for my wildness, and was going to be a good man, only I must prove myself, and remember that being a man wasn't all fun and freedom, it was hard work too, and responsibility, minding what people said and she meant not only the priests but everybody who lived respectable, learning how to do things the right way, and not dreaming and goofing off. I must work out my bond-period, and save money, and then I'd be free and I could go apprentice and learn a good trade, like for instance inn-keeping, and then some time—why, maybe some time—but right now, she said, why didn't I set myself something sort of difficult to do, a real task, to prove myself, and stay right with it? Not goofing off.

"Like what for instance?"

"Like—oh, I don't know, Davy dear. You should pick it yourself. It should be something—you know, difficult but not impossible, and—and good and honest of course. Then I'll be proud of you. I know I'm right, Davy, you'll see. Now I'm going to say good night, and you go straight to sleep, you hear? And we won't talk about any of this in the morning, either. I wasn't here, understand? You was here all day, and fed the stock yourself." She took up the lantern. "Good night, Davy."

"Good night," I said, and could have tried for another kiss, but instead I lay there like a boy wondering if she'd give me one, which she didn't. She left the lantern by the top of the ladder, blew it out, and was gone.

I slept, and I woke in a place full of the black dark of horror. The loft, yes—gradually I knew that, as a dream drained away from me. Some of me, though, was still running mush-footed through a house something like the Bull-and-Iron but with ten thousand rooms, and the black wolf followed me, slow as I was because he could wait, and snuffling in noises like words: "Look at me, look at me, look at me!" If I looked, he would have me, so I went on, opening doors, every new room

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

strange but with no window, no sunrise-place. Not one of the doors would latch. Sometimes I leaned my back against one, hearing him slobber and whisper at the crack: "Look at me!" He could open it as soon as I took my weight away, and anyway I must go on to the next door, and the next . . . When I knew I was awake, when I heard my own rustling against the hay and recognized the feel of my pallet, my own voice broke loose in a whimper: "I'm not a brain-mue. I'll prove it, I'll prove it!"

I did get myself in hand. By the time I thought I had courage enough to fumble after that lantern and my flint-and-steel, I no longer needed the light. It was just the loft, with even a trace of moonlight in the one high window. I could wipe the sweat from my body (remembering too late that it was Emmia's blanket) and think a while.

Something difficult, and good, and honest. I knew soon enough what that had to be. Then it hardly even troubled me that I couldn't tell Emmia of it afterward, for there was much about it that wouldn't seem right to her and so couldn't be explained. I understood there would always be many things I would not be telling to Emmia . . .

When the square of moonlight began to change to a different gray I was dressed and ready, the sack with the horn over my shoulder. Nothing remained of the spider-bite but a nasty itch, and that was fading out.

I went down the ladder, out and away, across the city in the still heavy dark, over the stockade and up the mountain with barely enough light to be sure of my course. I traveled slowly, but I was passing my cave (not pausing even to see if the ants had got after my bacon) when the first-light glory told me that sunrise would arrive within the hour. I didn't see it—when it happened I was passing through that solemn big-tree region where yesterday I might have killed the mue. If I were the killing kind.

In the tangled ugly passage where the grapevines thickened overhead, I caught a wrong smell. Wolf smell.

My knife came out, and was steady in my fingers. My back chilled and tingled, but I think I was more angry than anything else. Angry that I must be halted or threatened by a danger that had nothing to do (I thought) with my errand. I didn't stop, just worked on through the bad undergrowth watching everywhere, sniffing, as nearly ready as I could be, seeing that no one is ever quite ready to die. All the way to the cat-briers.

The black wolf was directly below the strand of grape-vine that hung down outside the mue's tu-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

lip-tree, and she was dead. I stepped up to the huge carcass and prodded it with my knife. She stretched maybe six feet from nose to tail-tip, an old one, scarred, dingy black, foul. Her neck was broken. I proved to myself, lifting and prodding, that her neck was broken—if you don't believe it, remember you never saw my North Mountain mue, and his arms. The patches and spatters of blood on the rocks, the ground, the dangling grape-stem, were not hers.

Her body was beginning to stiffen, and cold. It must have happened yesterday, maybe when he came back from the pool, careless perhaps, wondering why he hadn't started changing to man-beautiful.

I set down my sack and climbed the tulip tree. I called to him a few times. It troubled me that I hadn't any name for him. I called: "Friend? I'm coming up, friend. I brought something back to you." He didn't answer. I knew why, before I reached the branch above his nest and looked down. The carrion ants were already at work, earning their living. I said: "I brought it back. I did steal it, friend, but I brought it back.'

I don't remember how many other things I said that would never be answered.

I went back through the forest to my cave, with my golden horn, and the day passed over me. Much of the time I wasn't thinking at all, but in other hours I was. About the thirty-tonners that sail out of Levannon for the northern passage, and then eastward—for the safe Nuin harbors, yes, but eastward, toward the place where the sun is set afire for the day. And I would not go to Levannon on a roan horse, with the blessing and the money of the Kurin family and three attendants, and a serving-maid to warm the bed for me in the next inn. But I would go.

In the afternoon, in the strong light on my ledge, I took out my golden horn, and learned a little. Not a great deal—that day I touched only the fringes of it, but I did discover many notes that the mue had not shown me, and when I ceased to be afraid, the cliff rang, and the voice was clearer than any fancied voice of angels, and it was mine.

Late in the day, I did something like what my poor mue had done. I went up the mountainside well away from my ledge, and with a flat rock I scooped out a pocket in the ground, scattering the earth and wiping out my traces, leaving my golden horn with nothing to mark the place except what was written in my memory. My sack, as well as the mue's gray moss, was wrapped around it, for I knew it was only a little while before I would be coming back for it. In the meantime there was a need.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

I waited a long time outside the stockade that night. It must have been midnight, or past, when I climbed it, and crossed the city once more, and stood a foolish while in the darkness watching Emmia's dark window, and the jinny-creeper vine, and hearing the city's last noises dwindle away into nothing. I remember being astonished, so changed was the world (or if you like, myself), that I had never before even dreamed of climbing that vine to her window.

Now it seemed to me that I was afraid of nothing, I was only waiting for a little deeper quiet, a heavier sleep in the old grimy city that had nothing to do with me. Then my hands were on the vine, and I was climbing up through a harmless whisper of leaves, and opening her window all the way, and crossing the sweet-smelling room where I'd never entered before—but her soft breathing told me where she was, and that she slept.

I would have liked to stand there by her bed a long time, feeling her nearness without touching her, just able to make out a little of her face and her arm in the hint of moonlight. But perhaps I *was* afraid, a little, afraid of my own fear. I leaned down and spoke her name a few times softly before I kissed her, and she came awake quickly, like a child. "Emmia, it's just me, Davy. Don't be afraid of anything. I'm going away, Emmia."

"No. What—how—what are you doing here? What—"

I closed her mouth a while, the best way. Then I said: "I did something difficult, Emmia, and I think it was good and honest too, but I can't ever tell you what it was, so please—plesae—don't ever ask me."

And so, of course, she asked me, fluttery and troubled and scared but not angry, not pulling away from me. I knew what to do, and words were no part of it, except that many times, after our first plunge into the rainbow, she called me Spice. Other words came later, maybe an hour later: "Davy, you're not going away for true, are you? Don't ever go away, Davy."

"Why, Emmia," I said—"love-package, honey-spice, what nonsense! Of course I'll never go away."

I think and hope she knew as well as I did that for love's sake I was lying.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

THE MAGAZINE OF Fantasy and Science Fiction

MARKET PLACE

BOOKS—MAGAZINES

SCIENCE-FICTION book bargains. List free Werewolf Bookshop, Verona 15, Pa.

BIZARRE BOOKERY, supplies unusual books. Catalog 25¢. Box 21-HH, Midwood Station, Brooklyn 30, New York.

Locate any book. Aardvarks Fantasy, Box 668, San Diego 12, Calif.

25,000 Back number magazines; science fiction, fantasy, weird adventure, detective, western, etc. We buy collections, too. Magazine Center, Box 214, Little Rock, Ark.

All 123 F&SF Collection. Perfect. Make offer. Deil, Route 1. Box 587, Boulder Creek, California.

FOR SALE—250 paperbacks (½ SF), 50 cloth SF. Good condition. Best offer takes. R. Herschbach, Chokio, Minn.

BOOKPLATES

FREE CATALOG. many designs including SF and engineering. Address bookplates, Yellow Springs 4, Ohio.

BUSINESS OPPORTUNITIES

FREE Book "990 Successful, Little-Known Businesses". Work home! Plymouth—449W, Brooklyn 4, New York.

Letterheads, Envelopes, Sales letters, Price lists, Catalogs, Booklets, Wedding invitations—printed at low rates. Send for price list and free quote on your printing job. Aton Offset, 202 W. 79th St., Rm. 2W, N. Y 24

BUY DIRECT FROM FACTORIES! Appliances, Cameras, Watches, Free Details! Cam Company, 436AS Bloomfield Avenue, Verona, New Jersey.

FOR CONTEST FANS

WIN CONTESTS! Write for copy of "Prize Ideas" the publication that has helped our students win over $4,000,000 in prizes. Packed with winning aids, current contest news, entries that have won. Send 25¢ in coin to cover postage and handling. All-American School, Dept. FF, 1429 Spruce St., Philadelphia 2, Pa.

HYPNOTISM

Free Illustrated, Hypnotism Catalogue. Write: Powers, 8721 Sunset, Hollywood 46, California.

LEARN WHILE ASLEEP, Hypnotize with your recorder, phonograph. Astonishing details, sensational catalog free. Sleep-Learning Research Association, Box 24-FS, Olympia, Washington.

NEW CONCEPT of learning self-hypnosis! Now on tape or record! Free Literature. McKinley-Smith Co. Dept. T16, Box 3038, San Bernardino, Calif.

HYPNOTISM, self-hypnotism. Professional methods. Free brochures. Dr. Azadian, 1035 N. Fulton—Dept. 1, Fresno, Calif.

Subliminal Conditioning—Hypnotic Gray Sound Free Information—Audio-Sonic Laboratories, Box 8112, Amarillo, Texas.

PERSONALS

PEN PALS Wanted—17 years and below. William Kim, Thompson Ridge, N. Y.

SERVICES—AUTHORS

AUTHORS: Sumbit your manuscripts for free editorial evaluation. We publish work by new authors on all subjects: poetry, fiction, non-fiction, juveniles, religious studies. Greenwich Book Publishers, Attention Mr. Clark, 489 Fifth Ave., N.Y.C.

PUBLISH your book! Join our successful authors. Publicity advertising promotion, beautiful books. All subjects invited. Send for free manuscript report and our detailed booklet. Carlton Press, Dept. FSC, 84 Fifth Avenue, N. Y. C. 11.

MISCELLANEOUS

IDEAL GIFTS. Imported hand-tooled Mexican Wallets. From $1.98. Assorted sizes and colors. For more information write—Charles, 376 Chermont, El Paso, Texas.

LEG IRONS, $7.95. Handcuffs, $7.95. Leather Restraints; Fetters; Collector's specialties. Catalog 50¢. Thomas Ferrick, Box 12K, Newburyport, Mass.

ADVICE FROM A PHARMACIST: Why buy expensive and often worthless cough medicines? Try my grandmother's remedy. Recipe $1.00. Leo Sirota, 6026 Green Meadows Pkway., Baltimore 9, Maryland.

FOUR STANDARD DEVIATIONS above the mean? Contact Kevin Langdon, 823 Idylberry Rd., San Rafael, Calif.

Help SAVE THE WORLD with the scientific method. Information, Box 277, Berkeley, California.

Use the F&SF Market Place at these low, low rates: $2.50 for minimum of ten (10) words, plus 25¢ for each additional word. Send copy and remittance to: Adv. Dept., Fantasy and Science Fiction, P.O. Box 271, Rockville Centre, N. Y.

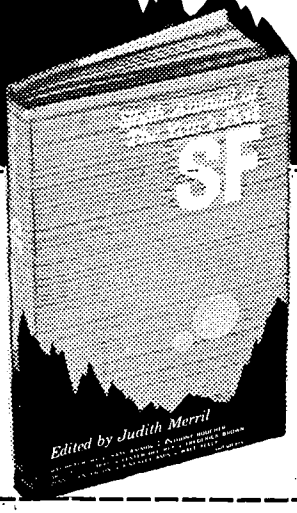
LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

New! Sixth Annual of the Year's Best SF

Edited by JUDITH MERRIL

In it: 24 stories — the best of the best published in the past year — by a galaxy of authors including Ray Bradbury, Isaac Asimov, Fredric Brown, Gordon R. Dickson, Arthur C. Clarke, Kingsley Amis, Howard Fast, Theodore R. Cogswell. Plus a bonus: 15 pages of poetry, cartoons (by Walt Kelly, Shel Silverstein and others), SF blues and ballads, and — new this year — a commentary by Anthony Boucher reviewing the year's crop of science fiction and fantasy. $3.95 at your bookstore, or order from Simon and Schuster.



Simon and Schuster
Dept. A , 630 Fifth Avenue
New York 20, N. Y.

Please send me.....copy(ies) of the *Sixth Annual of the Year's Best SF*. If not completely satisfied I may return the book(s) in 10 days and owe nothing. Otherwise bill me at $3.95 per copy, plus postage as payment in full.

Name.....

Address.....

City.....Zone....State.....

☐ Save! Enclose remittance and we pay postage. Same guarantee applies. (NYC residents please add 3% sales tax.)

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED